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AMONG ALIENS

AMONG ALIENS

A Novel

BY

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'THAT UNFORTUNATE MARRIAGE,' 'A CHARMING FELLOW,' 'AUNT MARGARET'S
TROUBLE,' ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES

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AMONG ALIENS.

CHAPTER I.

WORDS IN SEASON.

SIGNOR SANDRO came, and he brought with him a companion. I was not pleased to hear this announcement that my old *maestro* was not alone. The presence of a stranger was particularly distasteful to me at that moment ; and I had a strong opinion that he would take up Signor Sandro's time and attention, of which I was greedy. However, there he was, and there was no help

for it, and Signor Sandro assured me that his friend would not trouble us.

‘Why, Maestro,’ said I, ‘this is something new. *You* picking up a new acquaintance, and consenting even to make an excursion to Tivoli in his company! What does it mean?’

‘Am I such a bear, such a misanthrope, such a curmudgeon, that I can’t make friends with a stranger? Is that what you mean, Caterina?’

‘Something like that,’ I answered saucily. ‘Only for “can’t” read “won’t.” You know one word makes the most important difference in a text sometimes. But tell me about this man. I’m sure he can’t be a common person, or you would never have consented to travel with him.’

The implied compliment pleased Signor Sandro mightily. He was perfectly frank

and open in showing that it pleased him, and observed with much simplicity that he was glad to find I had at least appreciated that point in his character, namely, a contempt and dislike for the conventional and commonplace.

‘You don’t altogether appreciate me, Caterina,’ he said. ‘You set up your judgment against mine, in all sorts of cases, but——’

‘Never in Art, master!’

‘Never in Art? Well, no. I suppose not. You do allow me to know something about painting, I believe. But in knowledge of the world, now—in the conflict of life—you stick to your own opinion with an obstinacy!—but, *già*, all the English are obstinate. Rodolfo is as obstinate as a buffalo.’

‘Who may Rodolfo be?’

‘ Ah, I forgot; you don’t know his name! I don’t know it, either. At least I can’t say it, so I call him Rodolfo.’

‘ Master, you’re talking Chinese! I’m bewildered. Please to explain.’

Then Signor Sandro did explain, and this was his explanation. The stranger whose acquaintance he had made, and whom he had brought with him to Tivoli, was an Englishman who had come to his studio, and pleased the old artist by some intelligent observations on his pictures. They had got into conversation, and then the stranger pleased him still more by his enthusiasm on behalf of the unity and independence of Italy, and his praises of Garibaldi. He had himself shouldered a rifle under the command of the patriot soldier; on hearing which Signor Sandro had at once embraced him—considerably to the Englishman’s sur-

prise and discomfiture, as I gathered. Their acquaintance ripened rapidly, however, and their good understanding had certainly not been impaired by the fact that the Englishman had purchased a picture of Signor Sandro. It was a work that had long lain in the studio, and which my poor master had despaired of selling at all—the scene from Livy of Mucius Scævola before Porsena. Often had I heard Signor Sandro sigh as he looked at this picture on which he had lavished all his best skill, and which was really a fine thing. And then he would snort disdainfully, and shake his head, and cry out upon the debased taste of the day, and declare that it was worse than useless to aim at high, historical art, and that what the world liked was portraits of theatrical costumes, with a mannikin inside them, devoid of grandeur, poetry, or ideas. And

now he had sold his Mucius Scævola at a fair price. I was overjoyed, and congratulated him heartily. ‘Well, Maestro,’ said I, ‘I won’t grumble at your Englishman any more since he has shown such right feeling.’

Signor Sandro declared that his Englishman was a most wonderful man. He had been all over the world, was self-educated, and with great natural taste for artistic things. ‘He taught himself Latin, used to read Virgil and Horace, puzzling them out line by line, when he was keeping sheep in Australia ! Think of that, Caterina ! And he can read our poets, too ; has some cantos of Dante by heart, although he pronounces it—Ah, *Dio grande*, how he massacres the *dolce favella* when he tries to speak it ! But no matter, he is a fine fellow, is Rodolfo,’ said my old master emphatically.

‘And what *is* his name, pray? since it certainly is not Rodolfo!’

For all answer, Signor Sandro pulled a visiting-card out of his pocket-book, and handed it to me. On the card was printed in common square type, ‘R. Rutherford, Scaur Cottage.’

‘Oh,’ said I, ‘Rutherford!’

Signor Sandro looked at me with a *naïve* admiration, akin to that felt by the traditional cockney, who was struck with surprise at hearing the little children in Boulogne speak French so glibly. ‘*Caspita!* How quick you say it,’ exclaimed Sandro. ‘But what a language. Who is to pronounce it?’

Then he began to ask about Lucy. We were alone in our sitting-room, he and I. It was early, and Lucy was not yet up, but I expected her to make her appearance

every moment. I proposed taking a little walk with my master, so as to have an opportunity of speaking to him uninterruptedly. So, leaving word with S'ora Nanna that I should soon return, in case my sister asked for me, I put on my hat, and Signor Sandro and I went out together. We took our way along the terrace-road, leading to the Villa of Varus. All was still, peaceful, and beautiful in the fresh morning air. When we came to a part of the road where there is a semicircular stone parapet commanding the wide view, I stopped, and, leaning on the low wall, gave Signor Sandro a brief recital of all that had passed since we had left Rome. I had considered the question beforehand, and had resolved that it was best to confide in him. His goodwill I did not doubt; and if I mistrusted his discretion, or rather his power of fully sympathizing

with my view of the case, I still thought that less pain and annoyance to Lucy would arise from his being forewarned, than from allowing him to speak to her under the impression that we were still on good terms with the Corleoni. Lucy could not feign ; and it would have been cruel to lay the burthen on her of explaining how matters stood.

In a few minutes I had to acknowledge to myself that I had not done my old master full justice in hesitating to trust him. Nothing could be better than his way of taking my confidence. He spoke of Lucy with the most chivalrous delicacy and tenderness. All his best qualities were roused on her behalf. And I own that his withering scorn of Don Vittorio was a cordial to me. I had had to suppress my own indignation against him in talking with Lucy to

such a degree that it seemed to take a weight from my heart to be able to utter my full sentiments to a sympathizing listener. As to the Princess, he was evidently surprised and puzzled by her behaviour. He agreed with me that she could not have been ignorant of what was going on, and that her assertions on that score were a mere pretence. ‘No, no ; if Don Vittorio was in the habit of frequenting the schoolroom, depend on it the Princess Olympia knew it. She is no simpleton. We must do her that justice,’ said my master. And he could not be brought to see—or, at least, to say, for he repeated the current phrases of his countrymen rather from the lips than the heart—that some measure of simplicity would have been the only possible excuse for the Princess’s conduct ; and that since she had been aware from the first of her

son's pursuit of Lucy, her affectation of surprise and horror when it suited her to avow the knowledge of it to my sister was a base and cruel piece of hypocrisy. I believe that in his heart he did loathe such treachery, but so great is the power of a conventional phrase that 'simpleton' sounded in his ears a worse reproach than 'liar.' Another thing struck me with surprise in his reception of my narrative, and that was the power to injure us which he seemed to ascribe to the Princess Corleoni.

That part of the matter had troubled me not a whit. But it clearly troubled him. He had vague ideas in his mind of plots and cabals, and calumnies artfully propagated, which inspired evident uneasiness. And yet Signor Sandro was no coward, morally or physically. But he had that singular characteristic which seems to be in the

blood of so many Italians—a kind of suspicious credulity, which makes them prone to expect a stab in the dark. And, despite all the proverbial saws about judging others by ourselves, my own observation has convinced me that many an honest man in Italy is ready to impute the vilest dishonesty to his neighbours.

‘But what,’ said he, pondering, with his chin in his hand and his elbow propped on the wall—‘what does it all mean? Chiappa-forti is at the bottom of it, depend on that. He is not so attentive for nothing. He still hopes to get Lucia’s fifty thousand francs.’

‘It’s an odd way of ingratiating himself with my sister, to be a party to this cruel insult. But I acquit Monsignore of having laid that mine. I am convinced from his manner that the Princess has acted on her

own judgment, and that her violence was displeasing to Monsignore.'

'Her means may not have suited him, but doubt not that the end she aims at is the same as his.'

'Of course neither of them would have liked Don Vittorio to marry Lucy. That I understand.'

'Marry her! Child, child, not one of the party ever dreamed of the possibility of such a thing. But why let matters go so far? Why let the selfish brute entangle the girl's feelings, and go near to break her heart? Some motive there must have been. Even Chiappaforti, I suppose, doesn't delight in evil for evil's sake. And as to the Princess—she used to have a good heart, and although she has turned bigot, I cannot believe she's wicked.'

'True,' said I bitterly, 'she *has* wonderful

black eyes and eyebrows, and since you have not seen her for many years, the impression of her Juno-like bust and arm remains vivid in your memory.'

'Caterina!'

'Master, it stings me too sharply to hear you talk about that woman's "good heart." What good thing did she ever do that you can tell me of?'

He looked up and then down uneasily. 'Well, well,' he said almost meekly, 'perhaps I judge her too leniently. I remember her when I was a lad, you know. I used to go to her father's house. She was wonderfully handsome, the true Roman type.'

My heart a little smote me when I saw him bend his gray head in a deprecating manner; and still more it smote me when he suddenly turned, and, taking my hands, said kindly, '*Caterina mia*, you're a good

girl, a brave girl! You must have suffered, my daughter. I understand, I understand. And to bear up all alone—to have such a burthen laid on your shoulders! Very young shoulders they are to carry such weights. You have such an old-fashioned steady air of wisdom, that one forgets sometimes you are but twenty-four years old.'

The tears gushed from my eyes, and I saw the yellow road and the olive-trees and the distant plain dancing in a mist of prismatic colours. But I was unspeakably grateful for Signor Sandro's sympathy. 'A word in season, how good it is!'

As we walked back to the town my kind old master made me a confidence in return for mine, and a very unexpected one it was. He revealed to me that he had conceived the idea that Mr. Rutherford (whom he per-

sisted in calling Rodolfo) might possibly fall in love with Lucy and marry her, and push my fortunes in the world of Art, and, in short, prove a most admirably opportune and effective *Deus ex machinâ* to get us out of all our troubles.

‘For mercy’s sake, master, do not breathe a word of this kind to Lucy!’ said I, quite taken back.

‘No, no, no fear; leave me alone to manage it! But is it not a fine chance? An excellent idea of mine? Eh? *Dio grande*, you’re as silent as a stock or stone!’ He burst out in one of his irritable, impatient tempers, and scolded me all the way home for my ‘cold-bloodedness.’ I humbly represented that we English—at any rate, in my rank of life—were not accustomed to have marriages arranged for us by third persons in that business-like way; that under any circum-

stances the idea of such a proceeding would startle Lucy and disconcert her ; but that in her present state, with the most sensitive fibres of her nature still quivering from a cruel blow, Signor Sandro's project could have but one result, if it became known to her, namely, to make her hate and shun the sight of Mr. Rutherford. And, lastly, I said—this *very* humbly, knowing that it would make poor dear Signor Sandro terribly cross—that I did not, for my part, wholly approve of such schemes, and that one ought to know a man's character very much more intimately than my master could know Mr. Rutherford's before one ventured to recommend him as a husband ! Signor Sandro was very cross, as I had foreseen ; and in trying to put aside the discussion, I said, ' Well, master, we need not quarrel about it at any rate, for in all probability

Mr. Rutherford will never have the remotest idea of marrying Lucy.' And that made Signor Sandro crosser than before.

However, he recovered his temper as soon as he saw Lucy, and was so sweet, gentle, and tender in his manner to her that I loved him more than ever. Indeed, my only fear was lest he should be too gentle and sympathizing, and so upset Lucy's self-command. He kept looking at her so pityingly when he thought she did not see him, and whispering to me, 'Poor little lamb! poor little lamb!' Lucy was shy with him at first. She had always professed herself afraid of Signor Sandro. But, with more tact than I should have given him credit for, he quickly found the way to make her talk freely and eagerly; he spoke of my work, and praised it. It was an instinct of the

heart which made Signor Sandro touch that spring.

We went into the bare, brick-floored room on the basement story which was dignified by the name of my studio. And Lucy quite brightened up as she did the honours of my pictures, pulling out sketch after sketch, and descanting on their merits and their being 'so *exactly* like the places' or 'the people,' and reserving to the last, as a grand climax, my study in oils of Monica, which she turned with its face to Signor Sandro with an air of triumph.

Poor *maestro*, he had been all sugar over my sketches, echoing Lucy's words of praise with a suavity worthy of Monsignor Chiappaforti himself, and forcibly restraining several criticisms which I absolutely saw hovering on his lips. I, who knew every turn of his face, understood very well

what was meant by the twitching of his mouth, and the drawing together of his bushy gray eyebrows. But Lucy was quite content with his spoken acquiescence in her admiration of 'Catherine's beautiful drawings.'

I own that, when the canvas with Monica's head on it was turned from the wall, I felt very nervous and anxious. I had striven hard to do my best in it, and I attached great weight to Signor Sandro's verdict. I felt sure that, say what he might, I should not be deceived as to his real opinion of the picture; and so as Lucy presented it to him I stood by with a beating heart. There ensued several seconds of silence. Lucy's face fell. She had expected a burst of admiration. But I breathed a sigh of relief, for I knew that my master's attentive, silent, frown-

ing scrutiny meant approbation. He was interested in the picture: too much interested in the picture to think of administering sugar-plums of praise to please Lucy. As we three stood mutely there, Signor Sandro looking at my picture, and Lucy and I looking at him, S'ora Nanna's hoarse harsh voice suddenly broke the silence by announcing '*Ecco un Signore,*' and, turning round, we saw a stranger standing behind us in the open doorway, whom Signor Sandro saluted as 'Rodolfo.'

CHAPTER II.

RODOLFO.

THE stranger was presented to us—I cannot say in due form, for Signor Sandro, not to mention the fact that he was utterly unable to pronounce the Englishman's name, paid very little regard to 'due forms' of the merely conventional kind, at any time. But we were made to understand who he was.

It cannot be denied that the revelation of my master's project with regard to this unconscious Briton made me look at him with a very different degree and kind of interest from what I should have felt had the

revelation not been made. I had resolutely declined to join in Signor Sandro's airy castle-building, but nevertheless, when the subject of our morning's conversation appeared before me in the flesh, I confess that I could not feel quite cool and indifferent. I observed the man with all my eyes and with all my mind.

The first remark which occurred to me was, 'How intensely English!' And when he shook my offered hand and said 'How do you do?' I felt an odd sensation which inclined me to laugh, and yet brought the tears into my eyes. And then I remembered that I had not grasped an Englishman's hand, nor received an Englishman's greeting, since I parted from my brother at Southampton two years ago. I had seen and heard numbers of my countrymen, in the streets and the galleries, and the churches

and the museums of Rome ; but I knew none of them. They neither spoke to me, nor looked at me, nor cared for me ; and now this hearty pressure of the hand, this frank, cordial voice, and home-like accent, made an impression on me entirely disproportionate to their everyday character ; only that such things had not been everyday matters to Lucy and me for a long, long time. The second mental remark that I made about Mr. Rutherford was that he had by no means the air of a Mæcenas. He looked simple, almost rustic, and had his fair share of British ungracefulness of movement and gesture. He was younger than I had expected, looking not more than five-and-thirty at the most, with a fresh hale tint on his face—the peculiar red hue of a fair skin tanned by exposure to the weather—as if he had lived on an English down or

a Scotch moor all his life, instead of having been baked in all sorts of scorching climates, as Signor Sandro told me had really been the case. He had a shock of sandy hair and sandy whiskers. His upper lip and chin were clean-shaven, and enabled me to see the characteristic mouth. It was in his case a *very* characteristic mouth. When closed it looked tight and stern, with a resolute tension of the muscles at the corners, and the upper lip, although it curved markedly when seen in profile, was decidedly too long to be handsome. But the moment the lips parted that mouth became sweet and tender, and the smile was made singularly brilliant and attractive by a double range of square, white and even teeth. In these fine teeth, and in the winning frankness of expression when he spoke, lay all Mr. Rutherford's claims to

good looks. The rest of his features were ordinary, and even coarse ; and his light-blue eyes neither large nor finely shaped.

So much for what he said to the eye. To the ear he addressed a rather loud and well-toned voice, with a decided and strong provincial accent—a North-country accent I felt sure, although I could not pronounce of what particular county. In a word, a greater contrast could not be imagined than he presented to Don Vittorio Corleoni's refined type of masculine beauty, graceful ease of movement, and town-bred *nonchalant* elegance. Don Vittorio looked, not only as if he must appreciate artistic things, but as if he were kith and kin with half the gracious heads of young men which live on the canvas of a Raphael, or a Titian, or a Giorgione. Mr. Rutherford clearly belonged to another order of beings. I wondered within myself

whether the contrast were not as great between the two men in inward and spiritual grace, as in outward and visible signs !

I had plenty of leisure to make these observations, for after the first salutations Mr. Rutherford began discussing my picture, in Italian (fairly correct, but barbarously pronounced !) with Signor Sandro, and in English with Lucy ; and I stood a little in the background looking and listening with an amount of involuntary interest, which was entirely due to my old master's castle in the air, and which I was half ashamed of myself for feeling. A little to my surprise, Lucy seemed to take to our new acquaintance at once. She chatted with him quite at her ease, and pointed out to him all the merits of my study of Monica, with her adorable air of simple gravity, like an earnest child. I say that this surprised me because

—always shy with strangers—she had recently shrunk morbidly from everyone except myself and Monsignor Chiappaforti.

Presently I proposed that we should go into the sitting-room, and Mr. Rutherford, taking this perhaps as a hint that we should be glad to be rid of his company, shortly afterwards went away. But before he did so we had agreed to make an excursion to the Villa of Quinctilius Varus that afternoon. The men and I were to walk, and Lucy was to have a donkey, and we were to lounge or ramble as seemed good to us. Signor Sandro lingered behind for a few minutes to ask us what we thought of ‘Rodolfo.’ ‘*I like him very much, Signor Sandro,*’ said Lucy. ‘*And I think he has very good taste in pictures.*’

‘*Seeing that he has bought one of the master’s, and has praised mine, we, at all*

events, are bound to agree in that opinion !' said I. But Signor Sandro was almost cross with me for saying it, and would allow of no irony on the subject, but insisted that Lucy was quite right, and that she showed much more common-sense than I did, and declared that for his part he had never met with an amateur who possessed a better judgment in art than Rodolfo.

' Oh, but don't you know, Signor Sandro,' said Lucy, ' that Catherine always is sarcastic if people praise her pictures, and never will believe a word they say ?' And then she and my master scolded me in concert. This novel alliance between Lucy, who had been wont to declare that Signor Sandro did not half appreciate my wonderful talents, and the old painter who usually criticised my work in the most unsparing manner, amused me not a little. ' Well, well,' said

I, laughing, ‘I will make a point, in future, of giving implicit credence to all eulogiums, and treating corrections with the contempt they merit. And I have no doubt the result on my painting will be admirable! For the present you must allow me to go and attend to my work.’ And I went back to the studio.

I had not been there five minutes before Signor Sandro put his head in at the door to tell me that he and Lucy were going off together to the Villa d’Este, as it was such an exquisite morning, and meant to sit and bask in the sunshine, and look at the view, and do nothing, until lunch-time. So they departed, and left me to my work. And I cannot deny that I felt more hopeful and light-hearted than had been the case since our arrival in Tivoli. Sympathy and kindness and praise (although I took the

latter with several sobering deductions) were pleasant and exhilarating. But what exhilarated me most of all was to see Lucy shake off her listless apathy of look and manner, and talk and smile and flush up in something like her old eager way. I had Monica for an hour to put the last finishing touches to my study, and she, with her quick observation—which always reminded me of that instinctive kind of recognition a dog has of human expression—remarked that I looked cheerful to-day; adding in an explanatory tone, ‘Not so dull and down-cast, you know!’ I suppose that seeing me in what she considered an unusually pleasant humour moved her to be confidential. At all events, after some fidgeting and hesitation (purposely designed to attract my attention) she said abruptly, ‘I like you.’

‘And I like you, Monica, if you will but sit still.’

This checked her for a moment ; but then she said, looking up at me with unaffected, serious interrogation in her splendid eyes, ‘Don’t you like me at all, when I move about?’

‘Not nearly so much as when you’re quiet,’ I answered. But I could not help smiling ; and the smile neutralized the chill of my words. Monica jumped up and took my hand and kissed it. ‘I do like you!’ said she. Then, lowering her voice, ‘I like you better than the Signorina Lucia. Yet she’s the prettiest. And she never scolds me. You scold me. And yet——’ Here she broke off, as though perplexed to discover the cause of this phenomenon of her liking me the best. Fortunately the sitting had come to an end, and I was beginning to

clean and put away my palette and brushes ; so I let Monica talk on and bob her head about and gesticulate as much as she pleased. She came close up to me, and looking scrutinizingly into my face, said in a whisper, ' I can tell you a secret. No one knows it. Not even grandmother. She'd be frightened. If I told you, would you tell again ?'

' That depends on circumstances,' I replied.

' Would you swear not to tell ?'

' Certainly not, Monica.'

A pause.

' Would you tell if you had promised not to ?'

' *If* I had promised, I should keep my word ; but I don't mean to promise until I know something more as to what your mighty secret is.'

My firmness and air of indifference irritated,

and yet in some odd way seemed to attract her. She paced once or twice up and down the room, and then suddenly stopping in front of me again, said, 'I should like to tell you, because I felt better after I told you about that demon, that prince with the gold chain, and the gold hair on his face. You said I should, and I did. It lifted the weight from my heart. And now I have a weight—here—like a stone.'

'Is your secret about—that prince, Monica?' I asked as coolly as I could; but I felt my pulse suddenly quickened.

'No. Not about him. About—you wouldn't tell, to bring anyone to harm, would you?'

There was a tremulous eagerness in her tone, and she looked at me imploringly.

'Whom should I tell? And how could any secret of yours bring anyone to harm?'

‘ Ah—h—h !’ (with a long-drawn sighing exclamation). ‘ It could, though !’

‘ Well, Monica, you must either trust me outright, or hold your tongue. I will help you if I can, but I bind myself by no promises beforehand.’ And here I put my last brush in its place, and turned as if to leave the studio. Monica caught at my dress and detained me. ‘ Stay,’ she cried ; ‘ I will trust you. I make bad blood when I keep things to myself. And I have no one else. I dare not tell grandmother.’

I returned and seated myself. ‘ I listen, Monica,’ I said. She bolted the door inside, and then said in low quick tones, ‘ I have seen my brother Pasquale. He has been about in the hills by Olevano. Two days ago he came to Monticelli, and so he heard I was here. And he came in the evening and waited about and he saw me,

and I did not know him at first, but then afterwards, when he spoke a bit, I knew him. He said, "Don't tell grandmother, because she's old, and she'd be frightened and upset, and let out the secret, or else she'd want me to go and see her, or else she'd try to come and see me. So just hold your tongue." And I have, haven't I? Only to you, you know. Pasquale said, "Don't tell any of our people, because I don't know whom I can trust." But then you're a foreigner. You're different. You *are* different—ain't you ?

She was evidently a little uneasy at having disobeyed her brother's injunction ; but on the whole her trust in me predominated over her uneasiness. For my own part I was by no means pleased to be made the recipient of such a confidence, nor yet at the confidence itself. I heartily wished Signor

Pasquale out of the neighbourhood. From all that Monica had told me—and still more from all that she had refused to tell me—when we first talked of her brother, I was convinced that the latter had for years been leading a lawless, if not a criminal, life ; and I felt that he was a very undesirable neighbour in any peaceful community. I asked her what had brought him into those parts, and how long he intended to remain there. To the first question she answered that she did not know ; that she thought he had friends in the neighbourhood of Olevano ; that he might be looking for work, for aught she could tell. To the second she replied that Pasquale was going away from Monticelli (a tiny townlet on the summit of an isolated hill not far from Tivoli) almost immediately—perhaps to-morrow, perhaps even to-night. This was a welcome assur-

ance to me, and I willingly gave Monica the promise she craved for, that I would reveal to no one the fact of her brother's visit to Tivoli. Thereupon she became quite cheerful, and even boisterously gay ; began to dance a *salterello* to the accompaniment of her own finger and thumb loudly snapped in rhythm, asked when we were to make our promised excursion to Monte Gennaro, remarked that she had seen 'that Englishman' in the town with Professor Santi, announced in a trenchant style that he was ugly and she didn't like him, and then burst into a peal of wild laughter.

I had to check this ebullition of high spirits, and bid Monica take her departure. She did so with undiminished good-humour, kissing my hand violently, and saying, 'Ah, how right I was to tell you ! The weight is gone from my heart ! It makes

bad blood for me to keep a secret. But now I shall always tell you everything—everything !’ And with this dismaying announcement she ran off down the street, singing at the full pitch of her strong strident voice.

CHAPTER III.

AN OLD FOE AND A NEW FRIEND.

MONSIGNOR CHIAPPAFORTI called to see me that afternoon just before luncheon-time. I say, advisedly, to see *me*, for he was aware that Lucy was out. He told me he had seen her going to the Villa d'Este.

‘I am come to bid you farewell, Signorina,’ he said. ‘I leave Tivoli to-day.’

I felt not regret at this news, and affected none. Monsignore, however, did not intend that his adieux should be very brief, for he set down his well-brushed ecclesiastical beaver (such a contrast to the dust-laden

head-gear of Don Gregorio !) on the table, and seated himself in an armchair. I had no choice but to sit too.

‘I was glad,’ he began with an amiable air, ‘to see our dear Lucia looking cheerful and like herself, as she passed me this morning. She seems to have quite recovered her spirits, eh?’

‘I cannot relieve the Princess Corleoni’s conscience—still less her son’s—so far as to say that, Monsignore.’

‘Ahem! No, eh? Ah! Not *quite* recovered her spirits? Poor little thing!’

Monsignore’s compassionate tone was belied by a certain twinkle of satisfaction in his eyes. I was convinced that, for some reason unknown to me, he preferred Lucy’s sadness and depression to her smiles and cheerfulness. After a second or two, finding that I did not speak, he proceeded :

‘The old man with her looked like an artist—a painter, I suppose?’

‘Professor Alessandro Santi, Monsignore.’

‘Oh, *really!* Dear me! So that was Santi, eh? Aha! A man of great talents, I believe.’

‘I wonder you did not recognise him, Monsignore.’

‘Recognise——? I am not aware that I ever had the honour of Professor Santi’s acquaintance. I don’t easily forget my friends, either. Does he say he knows me?’

‘Oh, he certainly knows you. And he imagines you know him; but he never said you were *friends*.’

‘Oh! Ah, yes, yes; I think I remember that in the ’59 we were brought into contact once, respecting a—a—political matters. At Perugia—I fancy?’

‘At Perugia, Monsignore.’

‘Just so ! Santi, I have some idea, is a Perugian ?’

‘He is a Perugian, Monsignore.’

Then Monsignore dropped that subject : the events which liberal Italians speak of as the ‘massacre of Perugia,’ and faithful Churchmen, I suppose, deem a creditable page in the history of the Papal Army, did not furnish an agreeable topic to discuss with heretical me. He resumed airily, ‘And the other gentleman—evidently an Englishman—is he by any chance your brother come to pay you a visit ?’

‘My brother is in South America, Monsignore.’

‘So I understood from our dear Signorina Lucia ; but it was possible he might have arrived unexpectedly, you know. Ah ! the gentleman is *not* your brother ? No ; I see. Not your brother.’

‘Not my brother, certainly. Lucy left the house with Signor Sandro. He is like a father to us both—the kindest and most benevolent of men.’

‘Ahem ! Really ? Ay, ay, that is very pleasant for you. So you don’t know who the Englishman was who was walking with them towards the Villa d’Este ? Indeed, he went into the gardens with them. Don Gregorio chanced to see them, and happened to mention the fact to me. He has a great regard for Lucia, has Don Gregorio. Poor man — an excellent, well - meaning person, and in his way I don’t know a more valuable priest for a country parish than Don Gregorio. So you cannot at all tell who this English stranger might be, eh ?’

I could scarcely restrain a smile, although I was irritated, too.

‘Oh, Monsignore,’ I said brusquely, ‘if you are anxious to know, I can in a measure satisfy your curiosity, but only in a measure, for the gentleman is a stranger to me. The Englishman whom you saw with my master and my sister, and whom Don Gregorio watched into the Villa d’Este, must have been a certain Rutherford, who is fond of art, and has bought a picture of Professor Santi, and has come to see Tivoli in his company. Now you have all I can tell you about him.’

‘Bought a picture of Santi, has he?’ returned Monsignore, without manifesting the least discomposure at my uncivil bluntness. ‘Aha! he must have money, our friend the Englishman! What you tell me is really very interesting. Well, Signorina, I must say farewell. I shall be in Rome this evening, and shall see the Princess

Olympia either to-night or to-morrow morning.'

He stood waiting, hat in hand, and looking at me as if he expected me to speak, but I did not.

'The Princess will ask me about Lucia, I know. In spite of what has passed, I am sure the Princess cannot divest himself of her great interest in Lucia. I shall explain to her that our sweet little girl erred in ignorance and inexperience. You will not agree with me, perhaps, but——'

'Pardon me, Monsignore ! In that opinion I entirely agree with you.'

'I am delighted to hear it, Signorina, and not at all surprised ; for I have unbounded faith in your sagacity and good sense, when you allow them fair play.'

He looked greatly surprised, nevertheless, and scrutinized my countenance with a quick

disturbed glance from his eyes, whilst his mouth was at 'set fair,' as usual.

'Ignorance of evil and inexperience of treachery lead people to err in their judgment of such men as Don Vittorio Corleoni. Lucy so erred. We have all to expiate mistakes as well as faults in this world. Her expiation has been somewhat severe.'

'Ah! well, well; your bitterness is perhaps not unnatural. My dear Signorina, believe me there is but one antidote to such bitterness—but one effectual balm for angry and resentful feelings. Our dear Lucia has sought that antidote not in vain. It lies in the teachings and the consolations of our holy religion.'

'It is a pity, Monsignore,' said I, 'that the antidote was not applied to the bitter and angry feelings of the Princess Corleoni before she outraged my sister.'

He flushed a dark, angry red, and answered with an appearance of being flustered, which I had never seen in him before.

‘The cases, Signorina, are widely different. There is no comparison; there can be no comparison between the Princess Corleoni doing her duty as becomes a mother and—and—a woman of elevated rank, and the disappointment and chagrin of—persons in your position.’

‘No comparison whatever, Monsignore. Only I should have thought your antidote ought to be efficacious in all possible cases—even in an “elevated rank.” However, as to that, you are perhaps the best judge.’

‘You—you speak with a scoffing tone which is highly irreverent—nay, irreligious. I cannot discuss the matter with anyone who adopts that tone. It is wicked, absolutely wicked, to talk so!’

‘That, Monsignore, closes the discussion, as you say; although, in truth, “discussion” is not the right word for our talk. In such cases your Reverence will always have the advantage; since, although you may have nothing to advance against your opponent’s arguments, it will always be open to you to declare with the authority of your calling that those arguments are wicked.’

‘I could not have believed,’ said Monsignore, almost stammering with anger, ‘that any young woman in a respectable position could have been so—so audacious—so lost to all sense of veneration and modesty! This is the teaching of your *liberal* friends—of Signor Alessandro Santi and his peers. Mercy of Heaven, it is frightful to think of young minds being poisoned by such doctrine! I speak of Lucia, not of you; for I fear you are too hardened and self-sufficient already

to be made worse even by the communications of such a rebellious and irreligious man as Santi. A firebrand he always was. He has been marked as a disaffected and dangerous fellow for the last thirty years. And if right were done, he would be in the galleys at this moment! No wonder that young women forget the modesty of their age and sex, who keep the company of such a character.'

'Well, Monsignore,' said I coolly, 'whatever I may have forgotten, your Reverence's memory has been wonderfully and suddenly refreshed as to Signor Santi. It is not many minutes since you professed to know nothing about him.'

But I was not to enjoy my sex's prerogative of the last word. Chiappaforti, having once given his temper the rein, allowed it to run away with him entirely,

and seemed rather to enjoy the gallop. He scolded, he stormed, he anathematized me, and Signor Sandro, and a great many other persons, in very choice Italian, declared that he could not have believed that anyone—still less a young woman—would have ventured to speak to him with such unparalleled insolence and brazen audacity, and after a warm panegyric (which, unlike his praises in general, I must own appeared to be thoroughly sincere) on his own talents, virtues, and hierarchical dignity, he marched out of the house, with his round face fiery red, and his keen eyes sparkling with fury.

‘Well,’ thought I, ‘Monsignore has thrown away the scabbard with me, at all events. I don’t believe he will ever again think it worth while to disguise his antipathy towards me; and that is one thing gained!’

In truth, Monsignore’s wheedling smooth-

ness was far more distasteful to me, and made me far more uneasy, than his open enmity. And I cared so little for anything he could say to or of me personally, that I was able to receive Signor Sandro and Lucy with quite an unruffled brow when they returned.

Instead of sitting down to partake of our simple fare, as I asked him to do, my master brought me an invitation which he begged me to accept. It was from Mr. Rutherford, who sent his respects, and hoped the ladies would do him the honour to eat their luncheon as his guests, out at the Villa of Quinctilian. He had sent on a donkey with a basket of such fare as the inn afforded, and he thought it would be pleasant to take our meal there under the olive-trees.

I hesitated. ‘I don’t much like accepting this kind of invitation from a total stranger,’

said I. 'It's very well to make our excursion in Mr. Rutherford's company; but to put him to any charges in the matter is quite another thing. And—in short, I don't like it.'

'Nonsensical pride!' cried Signor Sandro. 'It's merely a very natural and proper attention on Rodolfo's part.'

'I object to accepting favours to which I can make no return,' I said.

'Favours! A bit of bread and meat and a glass of white wine. Yet you gave me my coffee this morning, and expected me to take it as a matter of course. What would you say if I were to begin reckoning up the cost?'

'Ah, that is altogether different, master; and you know it. If Mr. Rutherford were a poor artist like myself, I should not hesitate a moment.'

‘*Per—Giove Capitolino!* you are the most perverse creature! If a man has to count every *soldo*, take his hospitality as a matter of course. When you’re quite certain that he will never feel the difference whether two people or ten eat at his board—oh, then we mount on our high horse, and “cannot accept favours.”’

‘I think, Catherine,’ put in Lucy timidly, ‘that it would look rather overstrained to refuse Mr. Rutherford. It is such a simple matter after all, and no doubt he would like to eat his luncheon out there, and he could scarcely do so whilst we sat by and looked on, and refused to partake of it—could he?’

‘Oh let her alone, *piccina!*’ said Signor Sandro; ‘once she takes a thing into her head, she is as obstinate—I know nothing obstinate enough to compare with her.’

‘Come, come,’ I answered, ‘it is not

worth expending so much powder and shot about ; if you would like it, Lucy——’

‘ Yes, dear, I should.’

‘ Then let us say, “ Yes, please,” instead of “ No, thank you.” I don’t want to seem proud or pedantic.’

Lucy kissed my cheek, and turning smilingly to Signor Sandro, said : ‘ Ah, you don’t know Catherine when you call her obstinate ; she is only firm in a good cause. As for me, she spoils me, and has spoiled me with kindness all my life.’

She seemed so cheerful that I determined not to cloud her newly-retained brightness by telling her of my interview with Chiappaforti. The day was brilliant ; sweet, fresh, and yet soft, with the delicious softness of a Roman spring. The little change, the break in the monotony of our lives, apparently even the society of this stranger (although,

as I have said, Lucy was usually apt to shrink shyly from strangers), combined to raise my sister's youthful spirits. She was outwardly the gayest of the party when we set out; and only one who knew her as profoundly, and watched her as anxiously, as I did, could have detected the occasional fits of abstraction, the wandering eye, the unconscious sigh, the mournful droop of the mouth, which came ever and anon to chequer the smiling serenity of her mood. Still, to see her alert and interested in anything, even fitfully, was unspeakably delightful to me; it presaged the complete return of her old joyous, happy temper.

Lucy rode on a donkey, and although the driver of the beast, a ragged boy who was an old acquaintance of mine in Tivoli, accompanied us, yet Mr. Rutherford walked the greater part of the time beside Lucy, holding

her donkey's bridle, and every now and then stopping him at a peculiarly fine point of view in order that Lucy might enjoy it. For, as he truly observed, the main object of both steed and driver was to scuttle along to the end of their journey, and both had a mechanical routine way of performing the jaunt which it required some strength of will and arm to interrupt at unaccustomed places. Signor Sandro and I walked on soberly side by side ; now before, and now behind the others. And whenever we were out of earshot my master took occasion to exult in his own sagacity, and to point out to me how pleasantly Lucy was chatting and smiling with ' Rodolfo,' and to inform me that the latter had already confided to him (Signor Sandro) that he thought Miss Lucy one of the sweetest and most interesting-looking creatures he had ever seen.

‘Ah, master,’ said I gravely, ‘let us beware lest we do mischief where we mean to do good. Such sentiments as you want to encourage ought never to be interfered with by a third person unless on very strong and tangible grounds. I should be sorry if Mr. Rutherford were to be deceived into fancying that Lucy’s manner towards him means anything more than the natural simple sweetness which she shows to everyone. Believe me, however smiling she may look, however blithely she may speak, the old wound is not healed. It would quiver agonizingly at the slightest touch.’

‘Humph ! Caterina *mia*, I like our *piccina*. She’s a dear little girl. But—all women are not as steadfast, and—let us say obstinate, eh ?—as yourself.’

‘But, master——’

‘No, no ; not many of them are as

obstinate as my self-willed pupil,' interrupted Signor Sandro, at the same time patting my shoulder tenderly. 'And as to Rodolfo, let him take care of himself. He's no fragile blossom to droop at a young lady's frown. Men's hearts are pretty tough nowadays, I fancy.'

I looked at Mr. Rutherford, towards whom we were advancing during this conversation. The donkey had, for some private reason of his own, suddenly mended his pace, and carried Lucy and her squire some distance ahead of us. They now paused for us to rejoin them, and as I saw the Englishman's strong, sturdy figure, his cheerful, frank face, and general air of self-reliant vigour, I owned to myself that he did not look much in danger of pining in love-sickness. And I told myself, moreover, that it would be indeed a foolish and overstrained punctilious-

ness which should make me anxious about his peace of mind, at all events as yet. So I cast care to the winds, and, exhilarated by the loveliness of the day and the scene, determined to enjoy the passing hour with a thankful spirit.

CHAPTER IV.

SYMPATHY.

AFTER we had wandered about the ruins of the villa, peeped into the tiny church dedicated to the Virgin, and called La Madonna di Quintiliolo (an odd reminiscence of Horace's pagan friend!), climbed a little up the slopes behind it, and gazed at the magnificent view from all these points, we sat down under some secular olive-trees, whose roots descended into the marble vaults of the ancient mansion, to eat our luncheon. It was a very good luncheon, we thought; but Mr. Rutherford's North-Country notions

of hospitality were by no means realized. He complained of its being but a poor kind of snack, although when we had all eaten heartily there was enough left to furnish an abundant meal for the donkey-boy and for the man who had driven out another donkey, a sort of sumpter beast laden with the hamper full of good cheer.

It was not only in providing food for us that Mr. Rutherford had shown his thoughtfulness, however. He had brought a couple of stout plaids for us to sit on, and insisted on rolling up his own great-coat into a cushion to support Lucy's shoulders as she leant back against the trunk of an olive. Then he asked if a cigar would be disagreeable to us, and receiving our ready permission to smoke, he stretched himself on the coarse herbage, resting his elbow on a little hillock all overgrown with wild-flowers, lit a very

fragrant cigar, and declared himself to be quite comfortable. For awhile we talked in Italian; but presently Signor Sandro got up, and strolled away, saying that he should take another look into the church. Mr. Rutherford offered to accompany him, but Signor Sandro opposed his doing so, and finally confessed that, feeling somewhat sleepy, he should take a short nap within the shelter of the church, as he was afraid of falling asleep in the open air. 'If I don't appear before, call for me when it's time to turn homewards, which I suppose will be in about half an hour or so,' said Signor Sandro. And he walked away, carrying his voluminous cloak in readiness to wrap himself up when he should leave the genial sunshine of the outer air for the chill gloom of the little church.

'It's odd how afraid the Italians seem to

be of the open air,' observed Mr. Rutherford. 'I should have thought that the Professor might have enjoyed his nap better here in the sunshine, with his cloak for a pillow.'

'Ay,' said I, 'but when open air means bad air, *mal'aria*, as it does here too often, you cannot wonder at their dreading it. You have probably no experience of the malady called Roman fever?'

'Nor personally of any other fever, so far as I know,' he returned, smiling, and knocking off the ash of his cigar. 'But I have seen the effects of a cognate malady to Roman fever, belonging to an elder branch, though;—what you might call the head of the fever family in South America. And a very ugly customer he was. By the way, Miss Lucy, hadn't you better wrap that plaid a little closer round you? The great precaution is to avoid getting chilled, I believe.'

‘ Oh, I am quite well taken care of, thank you,’ said Lucy. ‘ No fear of that not being the case where my sister is.’

I thought this not a very gracious way of receiving Mr. Rutherford’s well-meant attention, but he seemed to take it with perfect good-humour, merely casting a quick look at me, and smiling a little to himself.

‘ Never mind wrapping me up—I give quite trouble enough as it is—but tell me about South America. How long is it since you were there ?’

‘ Five years.’

‘ Ah, then you cannot have come across our brother. He is in Brazil. He went there two years ago. But tell us about the places and people there. We can fancy him among them.’

Mr. Rutherford good-naturedly began to comply with Lucy’s wish. He talked of his

travels in South America and the scenes he had witnessed there, and the people with whom he had been brought in contact. I was struck not only by the good sense exhibited in his discourse—for that I should have been prepared—but by the vein of poetic feeling and fancy which ran through it. Nothing beautiful or romantic seemed to have appealed to him in vain. Despite his simple exterior and homely accent, it was impossible not to recognise that he possessed a poetic imagination, and that, moreover, he had cultivated it by very extensive reading. Whenever he warmed to his subject—as, for example, in speaking of the natural beauties of those luxuriant countries—he poured out innumerable quotations from poets old and new (most of whom I only knew by name, and many not even so), not with the slightest air of pedantry, but as if those were the

most appropriate words to express his thoughts, and as if they rose to his lips spontaneously. I listened with the greatest interest ; and turning my glance on Lucy at one point of Mr. Rutherford's description of a Brazilian forest, was surprised and mortified to see her eyes closed and her head drooping—in a word, she had fallen asleep. His eyes met mine, he ceased speaking, and I felt my cheeks grow red and hot.

‘Hush ! never mind, Miss Wilson,’ he said, in a low voice. ‘She is tired, poor child !—excuse me, but she seems so like an innocent, gentle child ! More than ever now that she is sleeping. My palaver has soothed her like a lullaby. Don’t disturb her for the world. Let me throw the corner of the plaid over that branch to shade her face from the sun—so ! Now we will move

just a yard or two off, lest our voices should awaken her.'

It seemed to me that Mr. Rutherford must either be extraordinarily benevolent and sweet-tempered, or else really inclined to be in love with Lucy. For certainly it was rather trying to be commanded to narrate adventures and make descriptions, and then in the very midst of a glowing period to find your audience nodding to sleep instead of being absorbed in listening. 'But when a man is in love I suppose he finds everything that his idol does well done and charming. And on the hypothesis of his cherishing a little tender sentiment for Lucy is his unruffled good-humour to be accounted for, very easily.'

Thus ran my thoughts — swiftly, as thoughts will run. And yet at the same time I struggled to resist the conclusion they

pointed to, being ashamed of the influence which Signor Sandro's match-making project had already gained over the tenor of my speculations.

‘She is not strong,’ said Mr. Rutherford, speaking under his breath, and looking over at Lucy.

‘She has been ill lately,’ I answered ; ‘but formerly, although not robust, as you see, she always had good health.’

‘Do you think the climate of Italy agrees with her—with you both?’

‘Yes ; I think so. For myself I believe any climate would suit me.’

‘What, even the rugged North ? I fancy you would find England bleak after this Roman sky.’

‘You speak as if I were an exotic needing a hothouse. You forget that I am an Englishwoman born and bred, and that it is

but two years since I have been living under alien skies.'

'*Cælum, non animum, mutant,*' murmured Mr. Rutherford. 'You keep an English heart, Miss Wilson.'

'I own I love my own country better than any other.'

'In short, you are a prejudiced Briton, eh?'

'Perhaps. But I have noticed very often that those who affect cosmopolitan principles, and declare that "one country is as good as another—and better!" are tolerably indifferent to everything but their own individual ease and comfort. Citizens of the world, and universal philanthropists, I look upon with suspicion.'

'You think that charity ought to begin at home, and stop there?'

'I think that the charity which is reared at home will be stronger on its legs, and

have a chance of travelling farther than any other sort.'

'Well, I have been travelling and knocking about the world pretty well ever since I was eighteen; and I have found good and bad everywhere. As the Italians say, "*Tutto il mondo è paese.*" But yet I own that whenever I thought of my bleak Cumberland fells something seemed to tug at my heartstrings. And when I went back to my old home last year, the first sound of the rough Northern tongue brought the tears into my eyes.'

'And you would not part with those feelings, although they may have cost you many a melancholy hour, to enjoy the most philosophical immunity from prejudices in favour of your own kith and kin.'

'Kith and kin!' echoed Rutherford rather sadly. 'I have few of my kith and kin left

to be prejudiced for ;—very near to me, none. An old great-uncle, my grandfather's younger brother, still lives a bachelor on the farm he inherited nearly sixty years ago, and of Rutherfords who call cousins with me there is no lack. But father, mother, and sisters are all dead and gone. You cannot think, Miss Wilson, what a delight—not altogether unmixed with sadness—it has been to me to be admitted to the society of my countrywomen this afternoon. You cannot tell how grateful I am to you and your sister for consenting to come. I love travel and the excitement of new scenes as well as most men ; but to one who has once known the sweetness of women's influence in his home, 'tis but a dreary business to lounge from coffee-house to coffee-house, from inn to inn, hearing nowt but gruff voices, and seeing nowt but bearded faces.'

When Mr. Rutherford spoke with any emotion—as he did now—his North-Country dialect came out strongly ; and I fancy that as he became more at his ease with me he ceased to keep any watch over his accent. To my ears it was not unpleasing, but had something hearty and homely in it which I liked. He asked about my brother, what his business was, and how he was prospering, and gradually, as we talked, I was led to tell him our simple history—barring always any allusion to poor Lucy's love-story.

That was her secret, and I felt bound to keep it sacred. A shadow fell across the grass at our feet, and a loud voice called out, '*Corpo di Bacco!* Why, if I had not waked of myself, it seems we might have stayed here till sundown, and all died of fever. Come, come, march! Where are those lazy donkey-boys and their beasts?'

Signor Sandro's voice wakened Lucy with a start, and then my master began to scold us all round for allowing her to fall asleep in the open air, and to prophesy dire consequences from our carelessness, at which, however, Lucy laughed incredulously. 'Signor Sandro,' said she, 'I don't believe a word of your croakings—not one word. What, up here on this hillside, with the air so sweet and pure, and the grass as dry as if it had been baked in a lime-kiln—to talk of fever and malaria! And, besides, I was only just dozing; I had not closed my eyes five minutes when you came up.'

Rutherford, who was behind her, gave me a comical look with raised eyebrows, when she said this, but at the same time laid his finger on his lip as a hint that we were not to undeceive either Lucy or Signor Sandro as to the duration of her slumber.

Whilst he bustled off to see after the donkeys, and whilst Signor Sandro was insisting on pinning a warm shawl more closely round Lucy's shoulders before she mounted, I looked at my watch. To my amazement it marked four o'clock. We had been sitting under the olive-tree more than an hour, then!

Our progress homeward was made in the same order as in the morning. Mr. Rutherford walked by Lucy's bridle, and my master and I trudged along side by side. Signor Sandro was full of 'Rodolfo's' praises as we walked. Was not he a good fellow—frank—honest—kind—sensible? A pearl of Englishmen! And without that coldness which was well known to be a British characteristic. Rodolfo had enthusiasm!

'And why not?' returned I. 'Enthusiasm! There's no lack of that amongst my countrymen, as I've often told you, Master.'

‘ Yes ; you have often *told* me so, *Caterina mia* !’

‘ Well, and what does your own observation tell you ? Trust to that, and never mind the cut-and-dried commonplaces which people repeat one after another, like parrots.’

‘ Ah, child, I own that Rodolfo has warmth of feeling ; but he is an exception. Look at the hard, cold phizzes of half the Englishmen you meet in Rome. Eyes like steel, and mouths that seem to shut with a spring.’

‘ The warmth is concentrated in the heart, Master ; not wasted in fizzing fireworks.’

This was an old dispute of ours, and we carried it on till we were close at our own door, where, indeed, Lucy had already arrived, and was being lightly lifted from her saddle by our new friend.

‘ Listen, Caterina,’ whispered my master,

plucking at my shawl to detain me. ‘You ought to ask Rodolfo to come and drink a cup of tea with you this evening, in the English fashion. It would only be right and becoming.’

Under other circumstances I should not have needed the hint ; but Signor Sandro’s unlucky project with respect to this stranger made me shrink from any appearance of hunting after his company. I hesitated, saying, ‘Oh, I think the poor man has had enough of us for one day.’ But as soon as we reached the doorway, where Lucy was awaiting us, she said to me, ‘Oh, Catherine, I have made Mr. Rutherford a promise which you must help me to fulfil. I have told him that if he will come here about eight o’clock, with Signor Sandro, he shall have a cup of good tea—what the Italians call “English tea,”’ she added, turning to Mr.

Rutherford with a smile ; ‘but I warrant you it was grown in China. We brought it with us from Rome. It is, I think, the sole luxury Catherine allows herself.’

Of this speech Signor Sandro only caught the word ‘tea,’ which he understood, and repeated with an imitation of the English pronunciation, lengthening out the vowel, ‘*Tee, tee*, yes it is very good, your *tee*—not that I ever drink it.’

I was half inclined to be vexed with Lucy for her over-zealous hospitality ; which was unreasonable on my part, for if any hint of that which was in my old master’s mind had reached her, I well knew that the cordiality of her behaviour to the Englishman would have been frozen to death in a moment. Mr. Rutherford stood for a second looking at me, and then said, ‘Oh no ; thank you. I think I had better not intrude on you this

evening. Miss Wilson looks a little tired, and Miss Lucy, too, may need rest.'

'Rest ! I have been resting whilst you others were walking, and I am all the better for the sweet, fresh air. No, you must come ! Must he not, Signor Sandro ?'

'Certainly, certainly. I will bring him.'

'But Miss Wilson does not seem to—to—approve,' murmured Rutherford, in what certainly seemed a disappointed tone. Thus appealed to, I could do no other than add my personal request to my sister's invitation, and so we parted, with the agreement to meet again in a few hours.

'Why, Catherine, I never saw you so inhospitable,' exclaimed Lucy, as soon as she and I were alone in our sitting-room. 'The poor man looked dreadfully mortified that you did not second me by a word.'

'Well, you see, dear, I hope I have not

been inhospitable, but—there's no use in being too lavish of your company to a total stranger. Besides, he might not think it polite to refuse our invitation, although he might not particularly care to come.'

Lucy stared at me. 'I don't understand why you should think so, Catherine,' she said. 'He seemed most pleased and grateful when I first asked him. And all the way home he has been telling me how he had enjoyed the afternoon, and what a delight it was to him to have some ladies' society. He's a good, simple-hearted man. I like him very much. And why should we not all be sociable and pleasant together, Catty dear?'

'Well, darling,' I answered, kissing her fair forehead, 'we *will* be sociable together, then, and as pleasant—as circumstances will permit.'

CHAPTER V.

THE PROFESSOR'S STORY.

‘You must not imagine that I was asleep all the while in the Church of the Madonna di Quintiliolo,’ said Signor Sandro, puffing away very contentedly at a long, thin, black cigar, with a straw in the middle of it, which he had the bad taste to prefer to one of Mr. Rutherford’s good Havanas. The latter would not smoke, but sipped his tea, and declared it excellent. It was so sweet and mild an evening that we had left one of the windows open which looked into the tangled, weed-grown garden, and the last beams of

the setting sun poured into the room with a warm and golden lustre. They burnished Lucy's wavy curls as she lay on the couch, and brought out the delicate beauty of a bunch of hyacinths which stood in an earthenware pitcher on the table near her. They transfigured even the S'ora Nanna's hideous blue and yellow wall-paper, and the bare brick-floored room with its rare scraps of common drugget disposed here and there, and its spindle-shanked stiff chairs, covered with faded red worsted damask, until the whole had somehow an air of pleasantness and peace. And it was all the doing of the blessed sunshine! Or nearly all: for Mr. Rutherford remarked that the place had a home-like look, which he attributed to our influence—Lucy's and mine. The effect was attained by very simple means, at any rate. Two or three books, the dainty white

hyacinths in their brown pitcher, a few of my sketches pinned against the wall, a clean white cloth on the tea-table, and Lucy's tortoise-shell work-case with her mite of a silver thimble in a separate little velvet house of its own, were all the materials we had at command in the way of decorative furniture. But I have wandered away from Signor Sandro's remark, with which I began this chapter.

‘No,’ said he again ; ‘I didn’t sleep above a quarter of an hour by my watch.’

‘And what were you doing then, Professor ?’ asked Mr. Rutherford.

‘Why, I got into conversation with the sacristan, a talkative fellow who seemed to like to let his tongue wag. He does not very often have the chance of a chat out there, I dare say ; and what do you think he told me ?’

‘That he wanted a franc, I suppose ; at least, that’s what those fellows generally tell *me*—unless when they want two !’

‘Dear Rodolfo, he knew better. I’m not a foreigner—and, moreover, I’m a poor devil—and, moreover, I’m an artist—all of which my friend the sacristan knew very well. No, not a word did the fellow say about francs ; I should have liked to catch him at it. I gave him six soldi to get a draught of wine, and he thought himself well off, I promise you.’

‘But, Signor Sandro, what did he tell you ? I was in hopes we were going to have a story,’ said Lucy.

‘Ay,’ returned my Master, ‘it *is* a story, and——’

‘Stop, stop !’ cried Lucy, clapping her hands ; ‘we must hear it properly. Catherine, do get S’ora Nanna to clear away the

tea-cups before Signor Sandro begins, or she'll come stamping in in the middle ; and then, please to give me my sewing. I always enjoy a story better when my fingers are busy. There's a dear Catherine. And you take your knitting and look comfortable and homelike. Signor Sandro has his cigar, and, besides, he is the story-teller ; but you, Mr. Rutherford—what shall you do ?

‘ I will turn over those sketches, if I may. I can listen and look at the same time ; that is, if Miss Wilson will permit ?’

‘ *I* permit, Mr. Rutherford,’ said Lucy ; ‘ as to Catherine, she will tell you her sketches are not worth looking at if you ask her. I mean to have everything my own way this evening.’ Then with a sudden submissive look like that of a little child, she put out her hand to me and said, ‘ You don't really mind, do you, Catty dear ?’

What a sweet winning creature she was ! I caught an expression in Mr. Rutherford's face as he looked over at us, which seemed to show that he thought her so, at all events. But he withdrew his eyes when they met mine, and began to turn over the portfolio full of my sketches—a very heterogeneous collection.

‘ Well now,’ said Signor Sandro, good-naturedly humouring Lucy's fancy, ‘ now for the story ! The sacristan at the Madonna di Quinctiliolo told me that the folks about Olevano have been in a great fright and fuss lately in consequence of the appearance in their neighbourhood of—what do you think ?’

‘ *Phylloxera* in the grape-vines ? Cattle plague ?’ suggested Rutherford.

‘ *Che !* Another guess matter than grape disease or cattle plague. Brigands, my friend ! Brigands, with guns and pistols

and knives in their belts. What think you of that for a "sensation," eh ?

' Brigands near Olevano, Signor Sandro ?' cried Lucy ; ' oh, I can't believe it !'

' Well, it's very startling, but not altogether unheard of. Some years ago—oh, it may be ten, or fifteen, the time flies so swiftly—there were three or four fellows who committed robberies thereabouts. They had come up from the Abruzzi, having by some miracle been hunted out in earnest by the gendarmes there. And so they gave the folks at Olevano a taste of their quality ; but I don't think they found it altogether a favourable place for their exploits.'

' Not a happy hunting-ground, eh ?' said Rutherford.

' Why, no ; they got peppered by a couple of dare-devil painters—an Englishman and a German—who laid a sort of trap

for them, and enticed them into the garden of a house they thought empty, and which they meant to rob, and then fired on them from the windows. Since that time I have always heard that the neighbourhood of Olevano was as safe as the Piazza di Spagna.'

'But is it sure,' said I, 'that the sacristan was not exaggerating or romancing? What grounds had he to go on?'

'Exaggerating? Oh, I suppose he was exaggerating; doubtless he was not speaking the exact, simple, severe truth, like one of your *Quaccheri* (by which Signor Sandro meant Quakers), but there is something in it. He spoke of a band of marauders armed to the teeth; now that may mean three or four—or perhaps even no more than one or two—ruffians with a knife apiece, and a rusty pistol among them.

But still, that robbers have been about among the hills is certain. The sacristan gave me chapter and verse : Prince Pozzodoro's *fattore* was stopped as he was driving home in his little *volantino*,* and robbed in broad daylight.'

'Miss Wilson looks really fatigued,' said Rutherford suddenly. 'I reproach myself with having bored her so long after a tiring day.'

Lucy turned her head towards me, and exclaimed : 'Catherine dear, what is the matter ? You are deadly pale !'

'Are you not well ?' asked Rutherford, whose voice had caught an echo of the anxiety expressed in Lucy's.

'Yes, I am quite well—perfectly well—and if I look pale I cannot help it ! It is the strong sunlight, perhaps.'

* A light, two-wheeled vehicle in use among the Romans.

I was vexed that the sudden shock of surprise and alarm which I had felt on hearing of the robbers should have betrayed itself in my face. Not that I had the smallest personal apprehension with regard to them, but the thought rushed into my mind at once that Monica's brother must be connected with these lawless vagabonds, and that their presence in the neighbourhood of Olevano but too clearly accounted for his return to these parts. After a minute or so I remembered that Monica had told me her brother was going away immediately. By this time he was probably far away from Tivoli, and if my surmise of his being connected with the brigands were correct, he had doubtless gone off with them to a considerable distance. After such an exploit as robbing Prince Pozzodoro's agent, they were not

likely to remain in the immediate neighbourhood.

‘Why, Caterina,’ said my master, taking his cigar out of his mouth, and looking at me with intently knitted brows, ‘you’re not made nervous by my story, are you? *Per Giove!* I didn’t know you could be frightened! But it looks like it, I declare. Lucia is as bold as a lion in comparison.’

‘I’m not at all ambitious of being supposed impervious to fear, Master; but as I am neither Prince Pozzodoro—nor Prince Pozzodoro’s *fattore*—I see no particular reason why I should dread the robbers. They would never be stupid enough to carry me off, for no one would ransom me who could, and no one could who would!’

‘Then you *are* tired, my daughter, for you look very white and fagged.’

‘Not a bit, Master, not a bit ! Pray don’t let anyone suppose that our pleasant excursion has done me anything but good.’

Mr. Rutherford had already risen to go away, but I saw so much loving anxiety on my account in Lucy’s face, that I exerted myself to induce him and Signor Sandro to remain. Lucy had a mandolin which she played, and I got it down, and to its accompaniment she and I sang one or two little duets, popular songs of Naples and Tuscany. Then Lucy insisted on my singing alone some pathetic old Scotch ballads which she liked. And Signor Sandro shook his head and declared that such ditties sounded only like ‘*roba da chiesa*,’ as who should say ‘psalm tunes,’ and that there was no melody or beauty in them at all ; and he begged us to wind up with ‘Santa Lucia,’ in order that he might

go away with some pleasant sounds in his ears, and he and Mr. Rutherford (who had a good mellow baritone voice) joined in the chorus ; and so our evening ended very harmoniously, and even gaily, after all.

I was astonished, on thinking over it, after Lucy had gone to bed, at the quickness with which she had glided into the manners of friendly intimacy with Rutherford. He seemed to have some spell to pierce the cloud of sadness which had dimmed her bright face during these last weary weeks. She not only talked with him and listened to him, but even smiled on him with somewhat of her old sunny, happy look. In a word, she seemed perfectly at her ease with him—she who was so shy with strangers at her best, and who lately had almost trembled at the sight of a strange face ! Might there be a hope that this Englishman should

drive away the image of Don Vittorio from her mind like a bad dream ?

Early the next morning, before Lucy was dressed, there came a basket full of wild-flowers and ferns, with the compliments of the ‘Signore Inglese.’ He must have been far afield and betimes to gather them. They were covered with dew, and so exquisitely fragrant that they perfumed all the room when I set them in front of my sister’s place at the breakfast table. Whilst I waited for her to come down I sketched them in water-colours on a scrap of paper. And as I took the portraits of the sweet fragile blossoms, I said to myself half involuntarily : ‘ Surely, surely something more than mere civility and politeness has moved this man to take so much trouble, and pay her so delicate an attention.’

CHAPTER VI.

AN APPEAL.

WE had settled among ourselves to make the promised excursion to Monte Gennaro and Horace's Sabine farm at the end of that week. Monica had sent word of our coming to her aunt at Licenza, and the ponies were ordered to carry us up the mountain. The weather continued to be delightful, and to grow more delightful day by day, and I, for one, looked forward to our little journey with the pleasantest anticipations. Mr. Rutherford, meanwhile,

took the opportunity of paying a visit of a few days to Rome.

Our trip was to be made on Saturday. On the previous Thursday morning I received a packet and a letter, both forwarded to me from Rome by the landlady of our lodgings there. For a moment I looked at the packet with some curiosity, but almost immediately I guessed by its shape what it contained, and my guess was right. It contained a pair of hand-screens such as those I had done for the famous bazaar, which Donna Laura's friend, Madame de Clavigny, had commissioned me to paint for her. I had finished, and sent them to her just before starting for Tivoli; and, to say the truth, had reckoned on the price of them to pay part of our expenses there. Now, here they were returned on my hands, without a word of explanation save a

message pencilled on the outside of the parcel, saying merely that Madame de Clavigny must decline to receive the screens. 'This is the Princess Olympia's doing,' thought I. I had half a mind to insist that Madame de Clavigny should pay me for my work, which had been executed in accordance with her express directions. But I reflected that I had no written order to show, and that my bare word as to the nature of the bargain would avail me but little.

Together with the parcel had come a note, as I have said. It was addressed to 'Miss Wilson,' in an English handwriting, and bore a huge and undecipherable monogram, blazing with gold and scarlet. On opening it I found it was meant for Lucy. These were its contents :

'Mrs. Ranville Egmont Jones regrets that the result of her inquiries from the ladies

referred to is not such as to induce her to engage Miss Wilson as daily governess for her daughters.'

'Number two!' thought I. The 'ladies referred to' were the Princess Corleoni and a certain Mrs. Elphinstone, a great friend of the Princess; and the lady who wrote the note and bore the title of Mrs. Ranville Egmont Jones had nearly settled to give poor Lucy a six weeks' engagement beginning at Easter. Her change of intention was also clearly owing to the influence of the Princess Olympia.

I cared little for the loss of Lucy's promised pupils. My sister would scarcely be strong enough by Easter to undertake giving regular lessons. But I could not help being struck by the immediate fulfilment of Signor Sandro's prophecy that the Princess would do her best to ruin us and

drive us out of Rome. ‘And truly,’ I thought, ‘if we were living in the “good old times” which I have heard Mrs. Elphinstone affect so much to regret, the Princess might probably succeed in her endeavour. As it is, I think she is biting a file.’

Nevertheless, the whole matter vexed me, because I knew it would hurt Lucy’s sensitive and affectionate spirit. There was a great comfort, however, in reflecting that by good luck the first shock of these new annoyances had fallen on me rather than on my sister. Lucy need know nothing about them until she was stronger and more cheerful, and until the lapse of time should have taken away much of their power to hurt her. I was again surprised, and almost ashamed, to find how inevitably the image of Mr. Rutherford came into my visions of brighter days in store for Lucy. However,

I reflected that my visions could do no harm so long as I kept them to myself, which I was very resolutely minded to do.

Apart from Lucy's trouble — if any portion of my life *could* be apart from her sorrow—I had reason to be content and cheerful. Signor Sandro had given me what from him was high praise for my study of Monica, and had encouraged me to set to work on the picture I had conceived, whilst he was near at hand to help me with his advice. I had sent two very small and unpretending works to an Art exhibition held in my native town, and just after Signor Sandro's arrival in Tivoli I had got a letter from the secretary telling me that not only were my pictures accepted, but they had both been sold on the first day that the exhibition was opened to the public. Altogether I

had much to give me serenity for the present and hopefulness for the future.

I was alone in my studio, and had begun to sketch in the first outlines of my picture. It was a delicious spring morning. The perfume of violets and the cheerful chirp and twitter of little birds came in at the open window ; and as I worked I hummed to myself an old-fashioned ballad about the ‘ Miller’s Daughter on the Banks of Allan Water.’ What with the chirp of the birds and my own singing, I did not hear the opening of the door, but someone entered and advanced close to the easel, and, looking up, I found myself face to face with the Princess Corleoni. She was dressed in black, and had a black lace veil thrown back over her close bonnet and fastened beneath her chin—a style of head-dress which did not soften the masculine severity of her out-

line. Her skin was sallow than ever, her brilliant eyes somewhat sunken, her whole aspect expressive of harassed anxiety and angry discontent.

I was amazed to see her there, and no doubt I looked so, for she said, 'I do not wonder that you are surprised. Of course you are surprised. I wish to have a few words with you in private.'

All my smouldering indignation flamed up at the sight of her haughty face, and the sound of her arrogant voice. 'I do not wish to speak with you,' I said. 'I think you have behaved with great harshness and cruelty. Only this moment I have received proofs of your persecuting spirit towards my sister and me. I have my bread to earn, madame, and I refuse to give up my working hours to you, or to allow you to disturb my mind and make me unfit to work at all.'

She was evidently unprepared for this, and stood looking at me irresolutely, like one who has received an unexpected check, and is deliberating on the next move to be made. I turned to my canvas and went on sketching, though with a very uncertain hand, it must be owned.

‘Do you absolutely refuse to speak with me, then?’ asked the Princess, after a pause. ‘I have come from Rome on purpose to have an interview with you, Miss Wilson.’

I laid down my brush, and placed a chair for her. ‘Be pleased to be brief, madam,’ I said.

‘Will you not sit?’ she asked.

‘No.’

‘I must avail myself of your offer of a chair; for I have had a great many troubles to shake me of late, and to remind me that

my prime of life is past, and that old age is overtaking me quickly.'

She was not old in years—scarcely fifty, I believe ; yet it was true that she was greatly changed and aged within the last few weeks. I stood opposite to her, partly leaning against the empty terra-cotta stove, and waited until she should speak again.

'You are feeling angry with me,' she said, beginning with a slight effort, 'because of that letter which I wrote to your sister. Monsignor Chiappaforti told me how angry you were.'

'I should have thought there needed no one to tell you that, Signora Principessa. Your letter was *intended* to hurt and wound.'

'You do me wrong !—But I have not come to talk of that. Only—I must say this one word : I wrote as I did because I

considered it to be my duty. It was a painful duty, although you probably may refuse to believe it.'

'No doubt it must have been painful to confess your son's bad conduct. For no amount of casuistry can prevent your seeing that he behaved treacherously—even if not to Lucy, at least to you. *I* say, to both.'

She passed her hand wearily across her forehead, and made this unexpected answer : 'He is behaving badly to me now ; very badly, undutifully, cruelly ! Miss Wilson, I have come to ask you to help me to bring him back to his home and his duty.'

I was so utterly taken back by this, that I literally could not answer her, but stared at her with a passing suspicion that she had lost her reason. What could have happened to bring the Princess Olympia to *me* with such a petition ? She did not keep silence

long. Reserve was unnatural to her, as to most of her compatriots. She could, and did, assume it on occasions, and for certain definite ends; but it never was the result of any shyness in displaying her emotions to the world. And now, moreover, she was evidently, as she had said herself, shaken by trouble, and eager to gain assistance in prosecuting her purpose, even at some cost of dignity.

‘You know that my son has quarrelled with me?’ she said.

I answered that I had not known it, nor had heard anything about him for some time past. Upon this she looked so incredulous that I repeated my statement emphatically.

‘Oh yes,’ she continued, speaking in a rapid, excited way, ‘he has quarrelled with me—with *me*—the mother who has devoted herself to his best interests ever since his

birth. And in his anger with me he has chosen to offend the Campograssos. His marriage will be broken off, after all the years of thought, and care, and pains I have expended on the alliance. I have had it in view ever since little Clelia Campograsso was ten years old ! You *must* have heard of it,' she continued with growing agitation. 'Although the engagement was not yet formally announced, all Rome knew that they were intended for each other !'

She doubtless believed what she said ; for the extension of the social horizon which had come to pass in these latter years by the mere influx of population from all parts of Italy to the capital was unrecognised by her and her immediate friends. They lived on in their narrow and self-imposed limits, supposing themselves to be still the focus and central point of Roman life.

‘And how does all this concern me, madam?’ said I, when she had made an end.

‘*Gran Dio!*’ she exclaimed, getting up and walking about the room with quick, irregular steps, ‘could any human being have believed in such phlegm, such indifference? Are they made of stucco, then, these English?’

As she spoke, the door opened, and in came Signor Sandro, who stopped short on seeing a stranger. He did not recognise his beautiful Princess Olympia of former days. But she knew him instantly, and hailed him by name. ‘Ah, Santi, is that you? Come in, come in. Shut the door. Fasten it. I don’t mind you, but I want no one else to interrupt us.’

Even when she spoke, he was evidently at a loss to know who she was. But a certain little imperious gesture of the hand, with

which she bade him shut the door, seemed suddenly to recall her to his memory. It was an habitual gesture with her, and a characteristic one.

‘Donna Olympia!’ he exclaimed, looking from her to me in undisguised astonishment.

‘Ah, you didn’t know me at first? I am changed, of course. Years, Santi, years change us all—and sorrows.’

‘Your life has not had a great share of sorrow, Donna Olympia—Principessa, I should say,’ returned Signor Sandro. He kept looking at her as if he were trying to discern the beautiful young Olympia of long ago in this faded, haggard, harsh-browed woman.

‘Not a large share of sorrows? We have had sorrows enough for a century within the last few years! We have seen revolution and irreligion and blasphemy triumphing

over all that is sacred. Injustice and oppression rule in high places. Souls are decoyed to perdition. Our sovereign is despoiled and imprisoned. Ah, Santi, I should think that many of those who entered on this path of ruin with the cry of patriotism and liberty in their mouths must bitterly repent their error by this time !

‘We won’t talk about these things, Principessa,’ said my master, with a gentleness and moderation I had scarcely expected from him. But I almost fancy that some suspicion of the Princess’s sanity flashed across his mind, as it had flashed across mine. Her appearance in my studio was so utterly unexpected and surprising, her manner was so excited, that the suspicion was really not unnatural.

However, after a minute or so she seated herself, and, assuming a more collected

demeanour, began to repeat to Signor Sandro what she had told me as to her son's quarrel with her and her fear lest his marriage engagement should be broken. She entered into further details respecting the latter than she had given to me ; pointing out how she had negotiated and manœuvred and schemed to bring the engagement to pass ; how the great wealth of the Campograssos made them presumptuous and exigent, and difficult to deal with ; with what masterly policy she (the Princess) had overruled all objections and got rid of all difficulties in order to secure the heiress for her son ; and how all her admirable combinations had been threatened with utter ruin by the sudden and lamentable rebellion of Don Vittorio, who had left the Palazzo Corleoni, and gone away without telling his family whither.

‘It does not answer, after all, to play

your game with live chessmen,' thought I to myself. 'The pieces may at any moment develop a disconcerting will of their own.'

'Now, Santi,' said the Princess Corleoni, '*you* know the world, and you know our habits and social views. You are a Roman born and bred, and you understand these things, as perhaps a foreigner cannot. And I want you to confirm what I say when I tell this young lady that, come what may, let his engagement go on or be broken, let Vittorio behave as badly to me and his father as can possibly be — still there is not, and never has been, and never will be, the remotest chance of his marrying her sister.'

'And, Signor Sandro,' said I, 'although you don't know many people of my class and country, you do know me well enough to believe me when I say that there is no effort

or sacrifice I would shrink from to prevent my sister being married to such a man as Don Vittorio Bastiani-Corleoni.'

There was a dead silence. I noticed at the time—notwithstanding the excitement of very unpleasant feelings—that Signor Sandro looked at me as though he thought I had been too hard on the Princess in making that speech. His conscience and his judgment were wholly on my side, as I well knew; and yet I am sure that at that moment he would have had me spare Donna Olympia Corleoni the mortification of finding an equal, though different, pride opposed to her own. Perhaps it was because some tender memories of the past were inextricably entwined with his thoughts of Donna Olympia; perhaps because she was a compatriot, and he could identify himself more fully with her feelings than he could with

mine—in short, whatever be its solution, such was the fact; and I record it now as I marked it then, because it seemed to me a curious touch of character.

All at once the Princess got up and stood in front of me, with her hands forcibly clasped together and pressed against her breast.

‘Then tell me where he is,’ said she.

CHAPTER VII.

A SURPRISE.

SHE had scarcely spoken the words when I heard Lucy's voice in the garden. I never knew whether the Princess Corleoni voluntarily shrank back at the sound, or whether I instinctively pushed her aside into a corner of the room not visible from the window, but she was out of sight by the time Lucy came up, and standing on tiptoe—for the window was at a height of some five feet from the ground—brought her eyes above the level of the sill, and called to me. 'Catherine dear, will four o'clock be too

early for our start on Saturday? Here is Mr. Rutherford come back; I told him that you were warranted to get up fresh, calm, and in a good temper, at any hour of the day or night. But he won't be satisfied until he has your own word. Who's that in the studio with you?

'The great bear, little white pigeon,' said Signor Sandro, coming forward, and leaning his elbows on the window-sill so as to fill up nearly the whole space. 'The great bear, very growly, and in a very surly mood; so run off before you are made one mouthful of.'

'Don't let Catherine work herself to death, Signor Sandro. She has been here all the morning, ever since—oh, long before I was up. Mr. Rutherford wants to say a word to her about the excursion. Make her come. I can't entertain him all by myself.'

‘I will come, darling. I will come. Go upstairs. Ask Mr. Rutherford to wait for a minute. No, no ; don’t stay there in the garden. Go up to our sitting-room, Lucy. I will follow you.’

She went away with her usual gentle docility. And then I turned to the Princess, and told her that I neither knew, nor had any means of knowing, where her son was, and that I was astounded at her supposing for an instant that I should know.

‘You are determined to be revenged on me,’ said the Princess with an agitated voice. ‘If you do not positively know where Vittorio is, you have some clue, some information. Think : it is a mother who is in anxiety about her only son. Then, if you do not know, your sister can tell me something. Let me ask Lucia.’

‘Not for the world,’ said I. ‘I will not

have her distressed. And I must go to her at once.'

'If you are afraid of my saying anything to her on religious subjects, I will promise not to do so;' and the Princess absolutely took hold of my gown to detain me, with an imploring gesture. Signor Sandro came to my rescue. 'Go, Caterina,' said he. 'I will remain with the Princess.' Then turning to her, he continued, 'Donna Olympia, I am in the place of a father to these young women. I know the whole story. What information there is to be given I can give you better than Caterina. And if I can help you I will. You can trust me. Go, my daughter.'

He almost thrust me from the studio, and as soon as I was on the outside of the door I heard him lock it.

I joined Lucy and Mr. Rutherford in the

sitting-room. They both said I looked tired, and they urged me to come out with them to the terraced walk among the olive-trees overlooking the Campagna, and steep myself in sunshine and laziness. ‘There’s an old olive-tree that you promised you would sketch for me in black and white,’ said Lucy; ‘so if your conscience requires an excuse, take a pencil and paper with you, and draw my tree as you sit on the grass in the shade.’

After a moment’s reflection I decided to do as they wished. It was better that I should keep Lucy safely out of Princess Corleoni’s way. So we three set out to walk through the dirty and narrow streets of Tivoli, towards the lovely terrace I have mentioned so often. Before quitting the house, I left word with S’ora Nanna to tell my master where we were gone. Preoccupied as I was with the Princess’s visit, and her

strange words and ways, I was yet not too much so to be able to enjoy the beauty of the day and of the scene. Donna Olympia had no hold on my feelings. I know not whether I am more hard-hearted than my neighbours, but I must own that I recognise in myself a large reserve fund of indifference to the opinions and sentiments entertained about me by persons whom I neither love nor esteem. Perhaps this was what the Princess had meant when she talked of the English being 'made of stucco !'

We rambled on slowly when once clear of the town ; Mr. Rutherford and I adapting our pace to Lucy's, which was still rather languid, and all three stopping every now and then to gaze upon the landscape flecked with flying shadows as the soft wind chased white fleecy clouds across the clear blue sky.

‘Let us all sit down here,’ said Lucy at length, selecting a sheltered spot, covered with coarse grass and wild-flowers. And as she spoke she spread her shawl on the ground, and seated herself. I objected that we were still somewhat far from the old olive-tree she had wished me to draw, but she declared she was tired, and would go no farther. ‘But you won’t mind walking just those few yards, Catty dear,’ said she in her coaxing way, ‘and just making that tiny sketch for me, will you? And Mr. Rutherford will walk with you to have a look at our favourite ravine. You haven’t seen our ravine, Mr. Rutherford? Do go, please. And if you could bring me a few ferns’—they grew in that moist place—‘it would be very kind.’

I demurred a little at leaving her alone, but she urged it so strongly that at last

I yielded, and pursued the path towards a wilder and more sequestered point which we called our ravine. I thought as we walked that Mr. Rutherford would probably not like being taken away from Lucy's side, to escort me and gather ferns. However, he complied with a very good grace.

‘And what is the news in Rome, Mr. Rutherford?’ said I, as we walked.

‘Well,’ he answered gravely, ‘I chanced to be witness to a very painful scene there. I believe you know one of the parties concerned.’

‘Indeed? I do not know many people in Rome.’

‘I conclude that you know this man, because Signor Santi told me that Miss Lucy had given lessons in the family, and you also taught drawing there, I believe.’

My heart made a great bound, and I could not help glancing round to be sure that Lucy was out of ear-shot. ‘Do you mean the Corleonis?’ I asked.

‘Yes; the man I speak of is the son, Don Vittorio, as they call him.’

‘Is he an acquaintance of yours?’ I asked wonderingly.

‘No; but I have seen him several times at a club to which I was introduced by an Italian friend of mine, and I have heard a good deal about him. I hope you will not mind my saying that I believe him to be a thoroughly worthless scoundrel.’

‘I don’t at all mind your saying so; but I am surprised that you——’

‘That I should use such strong terms?’

‘That you should know Don Vittorio so well.’

He laughed his frank, hearty laugh.

‘How quaintly and quietly you say that!’ he exclaimed.

‘But I have a request to make to you, Mr. Rutherford, which is no laughing matter. I beg that you will not allude to this—to this family of Corleoni before my sister. I cannot fully explain to you why, but the subject is a painful one to her.’

‘I think I know why, and I have carefully refrained from mentioning the Corleonis before her,’ he answered. And then, in response to my look of surprise, he said quickly, ‘I had heard something of the behaviour of those people to you and your sister before I came to Tivoli.’

I felt hurt and distressed for a moment, but I strove to conquer the feeling. Whatever Mr. Rutherford had been told, it was clear that it had not lessened his liking and respect for Lucy. So I made an effort to

regain a frank and unconstrained manner, and asked him what was the painful scene he had witnessed in Rome.

‘I will tell you when we reach our destination,’ he said. ‘The path is so narrow here we cannot walk abreast.’

We went on in silence until we came to the ravine. It is a narrow gash in the mountain, through which a stream of water forces its way down to the plain. The sides of the ravine are clothed with dwarf oak and a variety of shrubs and brushwood, and at its mouth, where it suddenly widens out, it is spanned by a stone bridge. The spot is very picturesque ; on the one hand, the upward-sloping hills scarred by the torrent, and on the other the vast Campagna seen through a tracery of olive-branches and silver-gray leaves. On the farther side of the bridge stood—and I hope still stands—

a singularly fine old olive-tree, gnarled and hoary.

‘Here is our tree,’ I said. ‘This will be about my point of view.’ And having arranged my plaid for a cushion, and placed myself, I got out my paper and pencils and began to sketch. Mr. Rutherford came and leant up against the bole of another tree close to me. He was a pace or so behind me, looking over my shoulder at the drawing, so that I did not see his face when he said :

‘Before I tell you what happened yesterday, I want to say a word to you on another subject.’ He paused a little, and then went on : ‘I want to be able to speak to you with full and free confidence. But as it is, I feel that I am in the position of a mere stranger, whose interference may seem impertinent.’

As he here stopped again, and seemed to hesitate, I said :

‘ I am sure you are incapable of impertinence in any case. And as to being a stranger—friendship is not always to be measured by time.’

‘ And love still less ! I want to have a better right than simple friendship, to take care of you and Lucy, and be trusted by you. Forgive me if I am too abrupt. Have I startled you ? I thought you could not be quite unprepared for what I have so long been wishing to say.’

‘ I’m afraid I am prepared for it,’ said I sadly. For now that he had spoken, I felt more sorry and down-hearted to think of his inevitable disappointment than I could have imagined beforehand.

‘ *Afraid !* Why afraid ? Don’t say that, Catherine !’

A sudden tremor and shyness so overcame me that I was unable to make him any answer. He had never called me by my name before ; and perhaps it was that—or perhaps something in the tone of his voice—or perhaps—— Briefly, I cannot explain why, but I fell into a trembling silence.

‘Don’t say you are “afraid” to hear what I want to tell you, Catherine.’

‘For your sake,’ I stammered, scarcely knowing what I said, ‘I am so sorry.’

‘Sorry that I think you the best, and truest, and dearest woman in the world ? Sorry that I love you with all my heart, dear Catherine ?’

‘Me !’

I dropped my pencil, which rolled away in one direction, whilst a puff of wind carried my sketch in another, and I sprang to my feet with a feeling of dizzy bewilderment.

Rutherford had left his post at the tree-stem and come round to stand before me when he spoke. And he now caught my two hands in his, and held me firmly.

‘ You, Catherine Wilson. Whom else should I love ? And what did you imagine I was going to say to you, except that I do love you, and honour you, and want you to be my wife ?’

‘ I thought you loved Lucy,’ I cried, blurting out the truth in my surprise and agitation.

‘ So I do. But I want her to be my sister, not my wife. And—oh, Catherine ! is that why you said you were “afraid” and “sorry” ?’

‘ I—yes ; I thought—I feared——’

‘ Then you don’t dislike me ; you don’t reject me ? Catherine Wilson, tell me true ; can you give me a little love in return for

so much—so much that I have given to you ?’

‘ I don’t know. I never thought of such a thing.’

‘ Will you think of it now, Catherine ?’

‘ I can’t think. My mind is all in confusion. I feel as if I were dreaming and striving to wake. It seems so very strange and surprising.’

‘ I think it will surprise no one but you, dear.’

‘ What will Lucy say — and Signor Sandro ?’

The mention of Signor Sandro recalled to me all my master’s plans and projects with regard to Rutherford, and I stopped short.

‘ As to Lucy, she is my best friend. And she found out long ago what seems so surprising to you. And do you know what she said to me only this morning when we

were walking in the garden? She said that it would make her very happy to have me for a brother.'

I sank down again on my plaid, and covering my face with my hands, tried to collect my thoughts and regain some measure of composure.

'Won't you say a word to me, Catherine?' asked Rutherford.

I looked up, and, with as much firmness as I could command, begged him to leave me for awhile to my own reflections. He complied at once; taking me at my word in a simple-minded, straightforward fashion for which I was grateful.

'Well, Catherine,' he said, 'it shall not be said that I refused the first request you ever made to me. You bid me go, and I go. It might not answer with some women, but'—shaking his head and yet smiling a

little—‘ you have a terrible way of meaning what you say. I’ll go and gather Lucy’s ferns for her.’

And in a few seconds he had recrossed the bridge and disappeared into the ravine with the bold, sure step of a practised climber.

When he was gone, I sat for some time with my face buried in my hands so as to shut out all external objects. I need not record the thoughts which passed through my mind, at first with unmanageable and confused rapidity, but finally with some reasonable sobriety and coherence. Whosoever has perused this simple narrative thus far will be at no loss to guess at the tenor of my meditations. I grew calm sooner than I had thought possible in the first shock of the great surprise I had had. For it was not merely the unexpected declara-

tion of Mr. Rutherford's attachment to myself which had agitated me ; it was the revulsion of feeling—the necessity in which I found myself of modifying, and changing, and rearranging all my thoughts and views in connection with him.

However, as I have said, I regained my composure very shortly ; or at least I so far regained it as to be able to think with some clearness, and to resolve on what I would say to Mr. Rutherford. Then I pushed my hair back from my forehead and lifted my head and looked up at the blessed daylight once more ; and as I did so I found a pair of very fierce and handsome dark eyes gleaming at me out of a forest of tangled locks, surmounted by a shabby peaked hat.

‘ Don't be frightened, Signorina,’ said the voice belonging to the eyes, in the accents

of a peasant of the Campagna. 'This is yours, isn't it?'

At the same moment a young man, dressed in the costume of the mountaineers, called *ciociari* (of which costume sophisticated specimens may be seen got up for pictorial effect, in the persons of the Roman models who haunt the Trinità de' Monti), handed to me my unfinished sketch of the olive-tree which the wind had wafted away.

'Yes,' said I. 'Thank you.'

'*Niente!*' said he, meaning that no thanks were needed. And then he seemed to be moving away in the direction of the ravine, but suddenly stopped and asked, with what seemed to me assumed carelessness, if I were going to remain there long.

'Until the English gentleman, who is with me, returns,' I answered. And there was something so wild and savage in the

look of the man, although his manner was perfectly inoffensive, that I was well pleased to let him know that I had a protector within hail.

‘How? The *English* gentleman?’ re-echoed the peasant. ‘Is he English—that man with the blonde whiskers?’

‘Certainly. As English as I am.’

‘Are you speaking truth?’

‘Of course. I don’t understand you, friend.’ To say truth, I began to be very much frightened, so strangely did the man glare at me. To add to my terror, I just then caught sight of a pistol stuck into his belt, and partly hidden by his loose jacket. However, I remained quiet, looking at him steadily, although my heart thumped hard against my side the while. For a second he stood irresolute, and then we heard the voice of Rutherford as he climbed

up from the ravine to the level of the bridge.

‘Here are some ferns for Lucy and some flowers for you. May I come and give them to you?’

My strange interlocutor seemed satisfied that those were the tones of an English voice ; for after listening for a second, he nodded to himself sullenly, swore a deep oath, and, turning round, without further notice of me, disappeared rapidly up the hillside in the opposite direction to Tivoli.

CHAPTER VIII.

TRUE AND FALSE LOVE.

RUTHERFORD came up to me with his hands full of ferns and flowers. He laid them down on the grass, and, looking at me earnestly, asked if I would now give him an answer to his question.

I told him that I would answer him with the utmost sincerity that I was capable of, that I was grateful for his attachment, and honoured by it, but that it had taken me utterly by surprise, and I was unable to say that I returned it as it deserved to be returned.

‘Do you think it impossible you ever should return it, dear?’ he asked, very gently.

‘What am I to say? Would it be fair or right to keep you in suspense on such a subject—to bid you wait and hope, and then, perhaps, say, “No, I find you are not so dear to me as the man should be whom I take for my husband”? I know very well that, as regards all worldly circumstances, you would be offering everything and receiving nothing in exchange.’

‘There is only one thing I want, or ought to want, in exchange, Catherine—the true heart of a true woman.’

‘Yes, and that is what you deserve to have; but I cannot tell you that you have mine yet.’

‘Ah,’ he cried eagerly, taking my right hand between both his, ‘that “yet” is a drop

of honey enough to sweeten many harsher words than you have said, or are likely to say to me!

‘But pray understand—believe that I am speaking the sheer plain truth from the depth of my conscience—I promise nothing.’

‘Catherine,’ said he, still holding my hand, and looking at me with a smile that was very tender and sweet, ‘I almost believe—I do begin to hope—that you have a wee bit of love for me hidden in some corner of your heart.’

‘I think so, too,’ I answered simply; ‘only not enough.’

‘Will you let me ask you again for an answer to my question at the end of this week? You talked of its not being fair to keep me in suspense, and to make me wait, but would it not be more unfair to turn me off whilst you are still uncertain of your

own feelings? I understand now that the very circumstance which I thought would help my suit with you has been against me. But sweet little Lucy's conversation had a special charm for me—she talked, and let me talk, of you.'

'I never guessed—how could I guess?' I murmured.

'May I ask you again in a week? Meanwhile I promise not to importune you; and don't fear that I shall reproach you if you are unable to give me a favourable answer. You have been as honest as the day with me. He must be a false loon himself who could misinterpret a soul so crystal-clear. May I ask again in a week? Come, a fair "Yes" or "No"?'

'Yes.'

'God bless you, Catherine!' With that he dropped my hand, and resumed his usual

manner—a considerate delicacy of behaviour to which I was not insensible.

‘And now,’ said Rutherford, ‘before we rejoin Lucy, I want to tell you what I saw and heard during my stay in Rome. I was in the studio of an artist of my acquaintance in the *Passeggiata di Ripetta*, which, as you know, borders the Tiber. We were standing at the window looking at the sunset light on the river, and the glow in the sky behind the dark mass of St. Peter’s dome, when I noticed a young woman walking to and fro in a strange, agitated manner. Sometimes she stopped and looked up at the sky, or down at the river, and then began again pacing up and down, up and down, like a caged animal. My friend and I noticed her particularly, for the place was solitary at that hour, and she was the only person walking there. There was a small open

carriage drawn up at a little distance, apparently waiting for someone ; and I saw the coachman looking at the young woman, and evidently making some jeers about her to a groom who stood near him.'

'Was the woman dressed like a lady?'

'She was miserably clad—squalid, almost in rags ; but her clothes seemed to be the remnants of tattered finery, and she was very handsome, although haggard and wretched-looking in the extreme. But what struck us both was the singular air of desperation—I can call it nothing else—about her.

'Presently there came leisurely clattering over the stones, from the direction of the Porta del Popolo, a horseman on a showy chestnut ; he pulled up and dismounted. The groom advanced and took his horse, and the coachman of the little open carriage

touched his hat. The vehicle had evidently been ordered to wait there and take him home after his country ride. "I know that man's face," said my artist friend; "it is young Corleoni." He it was, sure enough. No sooner had he sent off the groom leading his horse by the bridle, than the young woman intercepted him as he was about to step into the carriage, and began to speak to him. We could not hear what she said, but her action was imploring and vehement. Don Vittorio had started back in manifest surprise on first seeing her, but then he stood still, frowning and looking as wicked as ever I saw a man look in my days. Once or twice he tried to pass her and get into his carriage. Each time she plucked him back by the sleeve, and then clasped her hands, and was evidently pleading with him hard. I threw open the window and leaned

out, and then the woman's voice being raised, I distinctly heard her say, "I have been almost starving—*starving*, do you hear?" Don Vittorio made some reply which I could not catch, and she answered, with a burst of passionate sobs, "I know you said that if I ever came back you would do nothing for me; but why was I to be banished? I couldn't stay away any longer; I wanted to see some human being belonging to me, but they're all dead or gone away; there's not a single soul left that cares for me! Have some compassion on me, Vittorio!" And the poor creature laid her hand on his shoulder. He threw her off with brutal roughness, so that she staggered, and then he turned to mount into the carriage. For one second she stood looking at him with a face I shall never forget, and then, throwing up her arms above her head, she

rushed straight down the bank and plunged into the river.'

'Good God, how terrible!'

'Don Vittorio's coachman started up on the box, and gave a loud cry, but his master leaned forward in the carriage, snatched the whip from the man's hand, and lashed the horse, which set off at a furious, frightened gallop.'

'Without waiting to ascertain the woman's fate?'

'Without turning his head.'

'And the wretched woman?'

'She was drowned. They got the body out of the river very quickly. Some boatmen were at hand, and lost no time. There was a great tumult, and a crowd that seemed to spring out of the earth, as street crowds do. My friend and I tore down the stairs, and fought our way through the

throng, and saw the poor, dripping corpse carried into a cab to be taken to the hospital. But she never recovered consciousness.'

'What a horrible story! Is it known who the unfortunate woman was?'

'Originally a peasant-girl on an estate of the Corleonis in the Maremma. Don Vittorio enticed her away with him to Rome when he was little more than a boy in years, though a veteran in wickedness. It is altogether a black, black story.'

'How did you learn this?'

'From an old woman with whom the wretched girl had lodged in some miserable den in the Trastevere. We saw her at the hospital. My friend and I went there to see if we could do anything for the girl; but, as I told you, she was beyond human need or human help. Ah, it is well for

Don Vittorio that the institution of coroners' inquests is unknown in his country. If any public inquiry were made he would cut a mighty ugly figure.'

'But do you know that he has left Rome?'

'Left Rome? When?'

Then I related the Princess's unexpected visit, and what she had said to me and Signor Sandro. Rutherford listened attentively, and then expressed his opinion that the real cause of Don Vittorio's sudden departure was to be found in the tragedy of the suicide, although he might choose to let it appear to have arisen from his quarrel with his mother. He would in all probability simply keep out of the way until the whole matter had blown over and been forgotten. Mr. Rutherford was of opinion that this would soon be the case. I asked

him if he thought that the Princess was ignorant of the suicide. And he said he thought it very possible—nay, probable—that she was. No newspapers except clerical organs ever made their way into the Palazzo Corleoni, and those journals would take care to hush up a matter in which the name of so devout and noble a family was implicated.

‘ A miserable woman drowns herself in the Tiber. No one knows anything about her. The pious people, if they happen to see the statement, shrug their shoulders and declaim against the increase of suicide and general wickedness brought into Rome by the “Italians.” The next week it is all forgotten. Nay, I almost wonder at Don Vittorio’s thinking it worth while to run away even for a day, except that I fancy he was seized with a sort of panic terror. It

was panic that made him flog the horse and gallop off from the drowning girl.'

This shocking story quite drove away any shame-faced feeling I might have had in meeting Lucy again after Rutherford's declaration. Nay, it put out of my mind for the moment my encounter with the wild-looking *ciociaro*, about whom I did not think again till we were all once more safe back at Tivoli.

As we approached the house where we lived, I felt nervous lest we should come upon the Princess Corleoni, the unexpected sight of whom would, I knew, terribly agitate Lucy. Just when we were emerging from a narrow lane into the principal *piazza* of the town, a carriage dashed by us so close that Rutherford put out his arm to draw Lucy out of danger from the rapid wheels. I think he guessed who might be

the occupant of it, and turned my sister in the opposite direction. It all passed like a flash, but I, who was walking a pace or two behind them, caught sight of the Princess's pale face at the window. She let the glass down, and thrust out her head to look after Lucy and Rutherford, with a softer expression on her face than I had ever beheld there before. And then she was gone. I never saw her more.

I felt so worn out with the events of the day that I shrank with a sensation of bodily weariness from the interview with Signor Sandro, who was waiting for me when I got home, stalking up and down the garden, smoking one of his favourite long black cigars with a straw in it. But the interview had to be gone through. Lucy went at once to the sitting-room, when I told her that I had a word to say to my master.

‘Don’t put on your painting-blouse again, Catty dear,’ she said. ‘You were at work before seven o’clock this morning.’ Rutherford lingered for an instant at the garden-gate to ask if he might come and see us in the evening. But I said no ; I must have breathing-time—time not only to think, but to feel, for I was as one stunned.

‘You are too tired,’ said he. ‘Pray go to rest early.’ And although his lips uttered not a syllable more, his voice and his eyes seemed to set the bald words to a kind of pleasant tune.

‘Well, master,’ I said, when Signor Sandro and I were alone in the studio, ‘and what was the end of your interview with that high and mighty dame?’

‘She is gone back to Rome, Caterina.’

‘I know she is gone. I saw her.’

‘Poor Olympia ! She is sorely troubled about her son. Ah ! Well, child ’ (rousing himself from a reverie), ‘it seems that that chivalrous young gentleman reproached his mother for sending Lucia away, and had a scene of great violence with her and Monsignor Chiappaforti. And then, to spite his mother, he quarrelled with the Campograssos. To spite his mother, as *she* said ; but I think myself he was in one of his devil’s moods, and sought only to wreak his wrath and malice, let it be on whom it might. And then he is as proud as Lucifer, and believes that a Bastiani-Corleoni would confer a distinction on Olympian Jove himself by marrying into his family. And the Campograssos think as much of their fat Lombard acres as he does of his pedigree (they are not badly born, either, the Campograssos), and so, he being in the mood

aforesaid, a little spark would set ablaze a big conflagration.'

'But why did the Princess think it likely that *I* should know anything of her son's whereabouts ?'

'Oh, it seems he threatened her that he would make matters up with Lucia. And he dropped a hint of the same sort to the Campograssos, which made them furious ; for they were inclined to be jealous of the fair-haired English girl already. And the Princess thought, when he took himself off in that mysterious way, that he had probably come after your sister.'

With the horrible story of the drowned girl fresh in my mind, the thought of that wicked, hard-hearted man approaching my pure Lucy made me shudder from head to foot.

'But,' pursued Signor Sandro, speaking

with more blunt plainness than one of my own countrymen would have used to me on such a subject, 'that was not likely. For as to marrying Lucia, the Princess was right in saying that he never had the remotest intention of such a thing; and he has no doubt found out by this time that there is no hope of carrying off our little white dove on any other terms.'

Every nerve in my body tingled as if with bodily pain as I answered: 'And it was to the wicked and lying and abominable pursuit of this man that the Princess Olympia knowingly allowed my innocent young sister to be exposed! For she did know it. She knew everything that went on in her house. Oh, Master, how could any woman be so base and cruel? And, in God's name, why?'

'Child,' answered Signor Sandro very

solemnly, 'she would never have done it if she had not taken to devotion. Ah! you stare—you don't understand. But I see it all. Partly I guessed it before, you know; and partly Olympia let drop words and hints enough to convince me. Chiappaforti marked down Lucia from the beginning. She was soft and pliant, and—had fifty thousand francs of *dot*. Just the thing for our pet convent, and a soul saved into the bargain. But perhaps it might not be so easy to detach a bright, pretty creature like that from the world. Oh, but the saints take care of their own. (They say the devil does; and I believe it!) Here is Vittorio philandering about the blonde *Inglesina*. She is a good little thing. No real evil will come of it, and if she gets a little heart-ache, a disappointment—why, so much the more readily will she turn to the con-

solutions of religion—and the convent. There's your plan mapped out neat, complete, and all *ad majorem Dei gloriam*—for the greater glory of God. Unfortunately there intrude unforeseen factors into the working out of the calculation. A stiff-necked sister, Anglo-Saxon obstinacy and honesty, and, now, Vittorio's outbreak of rebellion. Rather than let the broad acres of the Campograssos slip through the fingers of such well-affected children of the Church as the Corleoni, give up the nun and the dower—and even the soul, if needs must. I made my bargain. Olympia will do our Lucia justice in the face of the world; and in return I will find out where her precious son is. I have means of doing so without scandal. The grand thing is to make no scandal. The Princess might have taken other means to get at her son, but they would have involved

the confession that he had gone off in anger. Now that must not be known to the world. No washing of foul linen in public, for mercy's sake ! *Ecco !*

I could not but observe that Signor Sandro, albeit sincerely disapproving the conduct of Vittorio (and perhaps still more intensely that of Monsignor Chiappaforti, whom I believe he secretly considered responsible for all the evil that had happened in the matter), and with equal sincerity sympathizing with Lucy, yet had a certain enjoyment in being mixed up with secret machinations, and inquiries, and the rest of it. And, moreover, he was far from being entirely antagonistic to the Princess Olympia. As to her desire that her son should marry into a wealthy and influential family, that he deemed not only natural but laudable. To arrange such matters on such bases was the

duty of a parent. My notions on the subject were the notions of an alien : well enough, perhaps, for sea-sundered Britons, but inadmissible for Continental civilization. But the kind old man had our interest at heart, as he understood it. And, although I thought it misplaced, I could not but be touched by his chivalrous tenderness for Donna Olympia.

‘Don’t think all ill of her,’ he said. ‘She has a real affection for Lucy. Yes, yes ; she *has*, I tell you, in spite of all that has passed. There were tears in her eyes when she spoke of her “longing to bring that young soul into the true fold,” and how she had prayed to the Blessed Virgin for her. You know how they talk, these devout folk ; but she meant it, she meant it. I know her, and I know that she meant it.’

The remembrance of the pale, handsome,

haggard face, with the yearning look in it, which I had seen gazing out of the carriage window after Lucy, rose up in my mind. ‘God knows!’ I said, thinking of that look. ‘Perhaps she did mean it. I won’t judge her so harshly as she judged us.’

Signor Sandro pressed my hand. ‘Good girl!’ he murmured. ‘Women ought to have some heart for each other, for I fear that we brutes of men lead them but a bad life of it. Lovers, husbands, sons, we cost them tears from beginning to end, *poverette!*’

With that he kissed my forehead and went away.

Lucy and I spent the evening quietly together. She was more cheerful than I had seen her for a long time past. In order to escape the effort of talking, I asked her to read aloud, whilst I sewed. She chose a merry tale, and laughed over it. And

when we lay down in our beds, side by side, she was still talking cheerfully, and looking forward to our excursion on Saturday. After we had bade each other good-night, I determined to think out all that had happened during the day. But instead of thinking, I could do nothing but live over again the minutes I had passed with Rutherford ; recalling all his looks and words, as I lay with closed eyes, as vividly as if I actually saw and heard them. ‘ This is mere idle, feckless dreaming,’ said I to myself severely. ‘ I mean to master my vagrant fancy.’ But just when I had taken this good resolution, I fell fast asleep. I was so tired.

CHAPTER IX.

LA ROSINA.

SIGNOR SANDRO was saved from taking much trouble about the search after Don Vittorio. Accident—the chance meeting in a café of Tivoli with the very *fattore* who had been robbed by the brigands—brought to his knowledge that Don Vittorio was staying at Olevano with a roystering party of young men ; amongst them two with whom my master had some acquaintance. These were a Belgian of noble family, and a Sicilian of no family at all. Signor Sandro's account of them was not favourable. He described

the Sicilian as being a clever, unprincipled, dissolute young man. ‘Although,’ said my master regretfully, ‘the rascal has a fine sense of colour, and has done some clever *genre* pictures after the fashion of Fortuny and the Spaniards.’

‘And is the Belgian an artist, too?’ I asked, whereupon Signor Sandro first drew down his bushy eyebrows and peered at me from beneath them, and then raised them and opened his eyes with a wide stare, as he answered, ‘An artist! I believe his noble family allow him five thousand francs a month; and he paints pictures.’

Which oracular response was all he deigned to make on the subject.

He wrote, however, immediately to the Princess, informing her where her son was. And he told me that he had advised her to let him alone to work off his mood of sullen

defiance without interference. ‘He is in devilish bad company truly,’ said Signor Sandro. ‘Drinking and gambling and evil-speaking will be their chief occupations. But I believe there’s no species of wickedness in which Don Vittorio Corleoni couldn’t give finishing lessons; so anyway he’ll be no worse than before.’

Rutherford afterwards said to me privately that perhaps Don Vittorio had plunged into a week of debauchery by way of exorcising any uncomfortable thoughts of the drowned girl which might be haunting him. For my own part I did not believe that Don Vittorio was haunted by compunctious visitings. I had a profound conviction of his cold and cruel selfishness. Sometimes I felt as if I myself were wicked for realizing his wickedness so vividly. Altogether the subject was one which made me shudder; and as I could

serve no good end by dwelling on it, I put it out of my thoughts as much as possible. Neither Mr. Rutherford nor I had told Signor Sandro of the dreadful scene on the *Passeggiata di Ripetta*. It remained a secret between Rutherford and myself—at least, so far as our own immediate little circle was concerned.

I had an unspeakable sense of comfort and sustainment in the Englishman's counsel and sympathy at this time. And the trust with which I relied on his good feeling and good sense increased with every hour of our acquaintance. Now, I had never in my life before felt it otherwise than irksome to be brought into confidential relations with persons whom I did not love. Intimacy and familiarity without affection I was constitutionally averse from. And yet the daily intimate and familiar intercourse with

Rutherford was very pleasant to me. ‘Decidedly,’ said I to myself, ‘I must love him ; for unless I did, I should detest the sight of him !’

No doubt this was a singular way for a young woman to reason about her first love. But I state the case as it was. I had been too much occupied with other things since I entered my teens to have gained the kind of experience in affairs of the heart which some girls appear to acquire instinctively ; just as they know what sort of bonnet is the fashion at any given time, without any ostensible teaching on the subject ! And then, to be sure, the unexpectedness of Mr. Rutherford’s wooing had allowed me no opportunity of gradually developing a tender sentiment. There had been no series of shy hopes and fluttering doubts, to move my fancy and attract my interest. I was asked suddenly

one day to love a man whom I had never thought of in the light of a possible lover. And that, I presume, is a rare case. Few women are wholly taken by surprise in these matters.

On the evening before our excursion Lucy and I were in the sitting-room. It was nearly seven o'clock, and at that hour Signor Sandro and Mr. Rutherford were coming to drink tea with us, and make the final arrangements for our start in the morning. I was putting a few flowers—the untended product of our tangled garden, but sweet and fresh—into the brown earthenware pitcher for the adornment of the tea-table, when Lucy suddenly said, ‘Do you know what became of the water-colour sketch you made of Mr. Rutherford’s basket of wild-flowers?’

‘By-the-bye—no!’

‘ *I do.*’

‘ Have you got it ?’

‘ No. Someone carried it off with my leave. Someone who thought that bit of your handiwork a precious treasure.’

‘ Dear me ! I wish more folks would think my handiwork a precious treasure ! Hitherto public appreciation of it has not risen beyond thirty pounds for a good-sized canvas.’

I laughed as I said it, but I was conscious of looking red and foolish.

‘ Oh, he is such a good fellow, Catherine ! And so fond of you ! I really believe he loves and admires you as much as even I think you ought to be loved and admired. He confessed as much to me. But I found it out long ago.’

‘ Really !’

‘ Really.’

‘ And suppose I say I don’t know who it is you are talking about ?’ murmured I, bending over the flowers in the brown pitcher.

‘ I can’t suppose that, because you couldn’t say a falsehood. Ah, yes, I found out that Mr. Rutherford was over head and ears in love with you, Catherine, long before he confided in me. And I was in hopes—I thought—I had made up my mind that he would tell you so that day when you two went to the ravine together. And he lost the chance, after all. How stupid of him ! I declare that——Why, Catherine, turn your face round this way ! No ; a little more. Let me have a good look at you—he *has* told you ! And what did you say ? Oh, Catty dear, you said you would have him, didn’t you ?’

‘ No. I said neither “ Yes ” nor “ No.”’

I——he promised to wait a week for my answer.'

'But why didn't you say "Yes" at once and make him sure and happy?'

'Lucy, Lucy, how could I? It was so sudden, so unexpected.'

'Unexpected? Why, Catty, what on earth did you think the man was dangling about in Tivoli for, all this time?' asked Lucy innocently.

There was no answering this question; so I had to be silent, and to feel my cheeks growing redder and redder.

'And, besides—don't be angry, but I'm sure you're a wee bit in love with Reuben Rutherford yourself.'

'Am I, do you think?' said I. And I said it so earnestly that Lucy burst out laughing.

'Are you? Don't you know you are, Catty?'

‘No ; that’s just it. And I want to be sure, because the truth—the very inmost truth—is due to him.’

Lucy laughed again, but there were some tears on her eyelashes, which she wiped away smilingly. ‘Well, look here, Catherine—goodness, how wonderful it seems for *me* to be giving you advice !—but just ask yourself this question : suppose any other man you ever knew had told you that he loved you, and wished to make you his wife, how would you endure to be daily and hourly in that man’s company, living in the greatest intimacy, and seeing his love for you shown at every moment in some way or other, not the less plainly because not spoken in words ? How would you—proud, shy *you*—like that, Catty ? If you don’t know, *I* do, that the poor man would be frozen alive. But you haven’t shown

any disposition to freeze Mr. Rutherford, Catty.'

This consideration was so completely in harmony with the thoughts which had passed through my own mind on the subject that I could not forbear smiling. But I merely answered that we had best not say more about the matter for the present, but wait, and let the hours bring silent counsel, as it is their beneficent wont to do, if we will but possess our souls in patience. Lucy first made a little pouting grimace at this, and then kissed me and said, 'Well, only this one word, Catty. I know John would be pleased. He's just the sort of man after John's heart.' John was our brother.

Then our guests came in, and we had tea, and were very cheerful, talking about the next day's excursion. This was to be the

order of it : We were to start at four o'clock in the morning in a carriage, and drive to a place called San Polo de' Cavalieri. There we were to mount ponies and ride to the summit of Mount Gennaro, and down to Licenza, at which latter place the carriage was to meet us again ; and after having visited the site of Horace's Sabine farm, close at hand, we were to drive back to Tivoli, and be at home before sunset. At first it had been intended that Lucy should leave the carriage at San Polo and ride up the mountain with us, but on inquiry as to time and distance we found that this would be too fatiguing for her ; and it was settled that she and Monica should remain with the carriage, drive leisurely to Licenza, where Lucy could rest in the house of Monica's aunt, and Signor Sandro, Rutherford and I were to rejoin her there, and get some

refreshment after our scramble on foot and on horseback. We were sitting quietly in the twilight, Signor Sandro smoking, Lucy and Rutherford chatting in low tones about his Cumberland home, and the rugged, picturesque Border country, and I sometimes striking a stray chord on the mandolin as a kind of accompaniment to a lazy sort of reverie I had fallen into—through which, however, I was conscious of all that my sister and Rutherford were saying—when, after one peremptory tap, the door was opened, and there stood Monica, her pale face glimmering white and ghostly out of her black locks in the waning light.

‘I have to speak with you,’ said she abruptly in her coarse voice.

‘To me, Monica? Well, come in, and make your salutation properly. You must not forget your manners, you know.’

I never allowed my young savage to take her own way unchecked. And I had acquired such influence over her that she seldom rebelled against the curb. Now, apparently from the force of habit, she dropped a rough curtsey, and muttered '*buona sera.*' But immediately afterwards she repeated vehemently, 'I have to speak with you.' Then, as I beckoned her to advance, she said, 'No ; to you, only to you—not the others.'

'What, may not even I hear, Monica ?' asked Lucy, smiling. 'I think that's unkind.'

'No, no ; not you,' exclaimed the girl, suddenly shrinking away from Lucy's outstretched hand. 'I want the S'ora Caterina.'

Something in Monica's face and voice moved me to comply with her request. I went downstairs with her to the studio, and

there the first words she uttered made me rejoice that I had done as she wished.

‘ You told me not to mention the accursed one’s name before *her*,’ said she, pointing upward to the ceiling to indicate Lucy, who had remained in the sitting-room above.

‘ Do you mean the Corleoni? No, no. You have done well to remember my injunction. What has happened?’

‘ La Rosina has drowned herself in the river at Rome.’

‘ La Rosina——?’

‘ Yes; the handsome girl that that demon stole away from my brother. But she was a fool. I would have stuck a knife into his black heart first, even if I had gone down under the water the next minute.’

‘ Hush, hush, Monica! You must not talk so wildly.’

‘ Ay, you and the Signorina Lucia say

that it's wicked to take vengeance. But don't the saints take vengeance if you offend 'em? Yes, that do they, and for such little things! Why, a young woman I knew down in the Maremma only just said to her sister, who wanted to be a nun of Santa Chiara, that it was sheer laziness, and that praying all the year came easier than spinning in the winter and reaping in the summer—and what did Santa Chiara do? Only ten days afterwards the young woman's baby fell sick, and nobody could tell what was the matter with it, and it pined and pined, and wasted and wasted, till it was as light to lift as a blessed palm-branch of last year—and then it died. And that was Santa Chiara's vengeance! Padre Bossi said so. Ay, the saints are quick enough to take vengeance for themselves. And if they won't take it for us, we must do our own work.'

The girl's face was livid and contorted with fury, and her eyes were red and swollen. She had been crying. But Monica's tears—I had once or twice seen her weep—did not fall like a soft dew, but rather like a scalding rain. I tried to calm her excitement, and to raise in her dark mind some images of tender sorrow in connection with the unfortunate young woman whom she called La Rosina. Presently Monica took hold of my hand, and kissed it in a quick, passionate way. 'Yes,' she said, 'you've been good to me, and you're sorry for La Rosina. That's why I wanted to tell you about her. Because, then, if you should hear—if anything happens—you will understand why.'

'What do you mean, Monica? What is likely to happen?'

'Who knows?' she answered gloomily.

Then, after a second's silence, shaking her head and shoulders as a dog shakes off water, she exclaimed, '*Basta ! Chi muore giace, e chi vive si da pace.* Who dies, lies still, and who lives, takes comfort. Signorina, you won't tell the others ? You won't say anything to them ?' And on receiving my assurance to that effect, she seemed to cast off her volcanic mood of fire and darkness, and to give herself to buoyant anticipations of to-morrow's excursion with the unreflecting mobility of a baby.

'Monica,' said I, struck by a sudden thought, just as I was about to leave the studio, 'where is your brother ?'

'Sh, 'sh !' she exclaimed, with her finger on her lips, and her eyes glancing suspiciously in all directions. 'Don't speak of him. He's gone. Gone far enough away—gone back to the Abruzzi.'

‘ Was he here—in Tivoli, or close to it—last Thursday ?’

‘ No, no ; not he ! He was far enough away, I tell you. Beyond those big mountains,’ she answered instantly, looking straight at me with her great flashing eyes.

‘ Are you speaking the truth, Monica ?’

‘ May the blessed Madonna strike me with palsy if——’

‘ That will do, Monica. I have told you that I don’t allow those imprecations in my presence.’

I was by no means persuaded that she was not lying, but I knew by experience that to press her further at that time would but have brought forth a string of oaths and protestations, whose vehemence would probably be in an inverse ratio to their veracity.

CHAPTER X.

MORTE AI TRADITORI !

MISTY darkness brooded over the scene when we left Tivoli next morning. A few stars still twinkled in a blue-black sky, and the air was cold and damp. As we jingled along the solitary road, some huge fragments of Roman aqueduct glimmered through the gloom. Then the gray tint of the crumbling rocks began to distinguish itself from the darker shadow of the shrubs which straggled over them. The infinite, chill sadness of the coming dawn spread slowly over the drowsy world, and struck us mortals silent,

as the new unknown day crept nearer, bearing hidden destinies.

When we reached San Polo—a miserable village on a lower spur of the Sabine range—it was still murky, and the place was muffled in a mountain mist. Whilst the carriage horses were resting, and the saddle ponies were being got ready, we entered, by our driver's advice, a sort of tavern, where he told us we could get some hot coffee. The cavernous room we stumbled into across a miry lane reminded me of a mousehole in a massive wall; for it was pierced, as it were, in the basement-story of a half-ruinous mediæval tower and castle. There were rude wooden benches and tables here and there, nearly all of which were crowded with young men, smoking, lounging, talking, and drinking. One or two miserable oil lamps faintly illumined the various groups,

and at the farther end of the stone-flagged room, a glowing mass of wood embers on an open hearth cast a red glare upon a little space, and made the neighbouring darkness darker. The young men were conscripts — so said the landlord, who brought us some hot coffee (very weak, but mysteriously black) upon a brass tray. They were on their way down to Rome to be passed through the military machine which grinds peasants into soldiers. Very good raw material they seemed to me for the purpose ; strong, deep-chested, with white teeth gleaming in vivid contrast with their bronzed skins, and dark, bright eyes, and an air of melancholy patience like the patience of an ox ; but with suggestions of a smouldering fire beneath it, which the ox has not. And in all their gestures and attitudes one quality was conspicuous—

grace ; a masculine, unconscious grace which had something of the grandeur of primæval Nature in it. The material accessories of the scene were of far more squalid coarseness than any with which Teniers has surrounded his boozing boors ; the figures which peopled it were, compared with those same boors, Hyperion to a satyr. Signor Sandro and I feasted our painters' eyes upon them. Lucy sat wrapped in her shawl, a little shrinking from observation, and stretching out her feet towards the glow of the hearth. Rutherford had gone out to see to the saddling of our ponies, and I thought Monica had accompanied him ; but suddenly I caught sight of her head bent down in earnest conversation with a man who was muffled in one of the huge cloaks called *pastrani*, which enveloped him from head to foot. The collar of it was drawn up above

his ears, and he wore a peaked hat with a broad, overshadowing brim, so that he was effectually shielded from recognition by prying eyes, if he wished to avoid such; and it struck me that he did wish it. But this impression was derived from a fleeting glimpse—almost momentary; for no sooner had I ascertained that the person with whom he was talking was Monica, than the latter rose and elbowed her way towards me through the throng of men with her usual nonchalance, and the man shrank back and seemed to melt into the shadow. I did not see him again. In answer to my question, Monica said carelessly that the man, seeing foreigners, was curious to know who we were, and what brought us thither. ‘And,’ said she, with a look of the quick cunning which sometimes flashed across and vulgarized her statuesque face, ‘I took

care to tell him that you were all artists. Artists are always poor, you know, and nobody wants to rob *them*. I don't believe there's any danger up in these hills even if you were as rich as the Pope. But who knows? There's no harm in being on the safe side.'

We were very glad to exchange the freshness of the morning air, even though it was sharp and keen, for the close, tobacco-laden atmosphere of the tavern; and when we went outside we found that the dawn was brightening the mountain-tops, and the driving mist was silvered. All was in readiness, thanks chiefly to Rutherford's energy, but now an unexpected delay took place, occasioned by Monica's positive refusal to accompany Lucy to Licenza in the carriage, and expressed determination to remain with me. She could, or would, give

no reason for this except that she wanted to go up the mountain with the Signorina Caterina. In vain we pointed out to her that Lucy could not go to Licenza alone, that her (Monica's) aunt would be expecting her, that if she were obstinate the excursion must be given up, and the day wasted. She made no answer to half the arguments, scoldings and coaxings that were addressed to her; and to the other half she merely replied, with downcast eyes and subdued voice, 'Oh, I want to go up the mountain with the Signorina Caterina.'

We looked at each other blankly. I was unspeakably provoked; but I felt myself to be powerless. For even if I had succeeded by sheer force of will in making her get into the carriage, there was every probability that she would leave it, and come after us before it had journeyed many yards on its

way to Licenza. And, besides, I did not like the idea of leaving Lucy alone with her in her present intractable mood. All at once Signor Sandro settled the difficulty. He would, he said, go down to Licenza in the carriage with Lucy, and Monica might ride the pony provided for him. He had been to the top of the Mons Lucretilis in old times, and could well give up seeing it again ; especially as he foresaw the affair would be fatiguing, and better adapted for strong young folks than rheumatic old ones. — In this way, too, both Lucy and I would have a masculine escort, and he would be able to see that Lucy was properly taken care of, and had a good rest at Licenza, and some refreshment out of an ample hamper which Rutherford had provided, and which was now safely stowed on the box of the carriage. ‘In short,’ said Signor Sandro, summing up,

‘this arrangement will suit everybody—except, perhaps, Rodolfo,’ he added in a low voice. ‘But it wouldn’t do to send him to Licenza alone with Lucia.’

‘It’s exactly the story of the man who had to cross the ferry with the fox and the goose!’ exclaimed Lucy, laughing. And then, with a grave face, but a playful gleam of the eye, she told Rutherford that she hoped he would endure the bore of Catherine’s company with polite patience; and that Monica would be the discreetest of *chaperones*, possessing the rare and precious quality in that character of not understanding a word he said! Then I was helped into my saddle, and Monica into hers, Rutherford mounted his pony, the guide flourished his stick, and we set off to climb the heights which rise behind San Polo; whilst Lucy and my master, having with much waving of

hands witnessed our start, were driven away by another road towards the valley.

Our way led at first along a rugged track—it could not be called a road—where there were the marks of wheels deeply cut into the soil. Then these disappeared. The track dwindled to a footpath which meandered across wild waste-land, and over pastures on the shoulder of some swelling hills, and past rare patches of maize, or millet, or oats, and through a jagged gully, which was in the autumn and winter the bed of a raging torrent. Now it was dry and bleached beneath the sun which shone bright and strong above our heads. Its rocky sides were fringed with bush and briar which were putting forth delicate green leaflets in the early Southern spring. From the steep, slippery gully, over whose loose rolling stones our horses' hoofs stumbled and toiled

with difficulty, we emerged on to a wide space of green turf. In winter this was a treacherous bog—in summer a pasture for many scores of grazing beasts. Now it was bright with vivid verdure, and enamelled with countless delicate lilac cups of the spring crocus. Our guide followed the only firm track across the quaking turf. He led Monica's pony by the bridle, I came next—my sagacious little beast following step by step in the hoofmarks of his predecessor—and Rutherford brought up the rear. In this order we crossed the bog and climbed again on the further side of it. Our way grew so steep and so slippery that the ponies could not keep their footing on the short dry herbage. We dismounted, therefore, and made the last portion of the ascent to the summit of Monte Gennaro on foot. Arrived there, the guide and Monica threw them-

selves down to rest, whilst Rutherford and I stood gazing at the wonderful scene before us.

In one sense the view was a disappointment, for the whole of the lower landscape was shrouded in a billowy sea of mist, on which we looked down from the purer air of the mountain. But the grand rolling waves of this cloud-ocean, the effects of sunlight gilding the gray, the looming shapes of Monticelli and Sant' Angelo — rising like volcanic islands, castle-crowned, above this hazy sea—made up a sublime spectacle. Gradually the mist shifted here and there, and through great rents in it we caught glimpses of shadowy depths of landscape far below. All around us reigned a serene stillness. Save ourselves and our steeds, the only living thing to be seen was one circling hawk, poised on dark, motionless wings in the

intense clear blue above a barren peak. And far away the song of a soaring unseen lark pierced the quivering air like a sunbeam.

‘Come,’ said Rutherford, at length, rousing our guide from his repose on the thyme-scented herbage; ‘we must proceed. There is a long road between us and Licenza yet, I take it.’

Truly there was, the guide admitted. And he seemed to think there was no time to lose if we would meet our friends down there at the appointed hour; although, characteristically, he made no voluntary effort to push on, nor to break from the allurements of *dolce far niente*. We remounted, and turned our ponies’ heads to the descent. We were to go down on the opposite side of the mountain to that which we had climbed. Our way now became bolder, more distinctly mountainous and

picturesque. We followed the course of a rapid stream, which had fretted a deep channel for itself through the rocks. Our path lay along the verge of the ravine high above the level of the water, which foamed and murmured mysteriously in the dark depths below. On the other side of the ravine rose hoary, barren peaks, some sober gray, some amber-tinted in the sunlight—and once we descried a tiny walled town perched on an aerial summit. It was the strangest, wildest, loneliest, forlornest-looking place! And then to think of it in winter, when the winds must rage round it like a pack of hungry wolves, and the keen-toothed frost is splitting the very stones on which it stands! On our right hand the great hills somewhat receded, and left a space of high pasture-lands between themselves and the edge of the precipice; and then again

pressed forward, narrowing the path and bounding it with lofty, frowning walls.

At length we came to a picturesque spot of several acres in extent, nearly level, and covered with fine spring grass. Under a group of ash-trees a clear fountain bubbled into an ancient stone basin, and, trickling over the edge, moistened a bank of lush wild-flowers with its silver rills. On one side this sort of prairie was bounded by the ravine and the river ; on the other by a group of rocks which rose sheer up from it, and on the summit of which grew a solitary fir-tree. Beside the fir-tree stood a figure, showing a clear dark outline against the sky. It was a man draped in the ample folds of a *pastrano*, such as the herdsmen of the Campagna wear, but, as he stood, he leaned not on the long spear-like staff which those

men use in guiding their wild herds of horses and cattle, but on a rifle.

‘What an admirable figure for this landscape!’ I exclaimed, when I caught sight of him. ‘He is exactly what was wanted to make the picture complete!’

‘Charming from the purely picturesque point of view,’ muttered Rutherford. ‘But I should like to know——’ He stopped; and on looking round at him, I found that his eyes were fixed on the man’s form with a mistrustful and suspicious look. The object of this look had not as yet perceived us, it appeared. He was standing motionless, like a sentry, and his head was turned down the valley in the direction towards which we were going, and the sound of our horses’ hoofs was muffled by the spongy turf, so that neither his eyes nor his ears had warning of our approach. Rutherford

rode up beside me, and made me halt with his hand on my bridle. 'What do you suppose your picturesque friend can be doing all alone in this wilderness with a gun in his hand?' said he in a low voice.

'Oh, he is in charge of some horses or cattle, no doubt. And as to his gun, it is very common for the *butteri* to go about armed, especially in the wilder parts of the country.'

I had not felt the smallest fear on first seeing the man; and even now it appeared to me highly probable that he was merely a herdsman, as I had said. Nevertheless, Rutherford's evident uneasiness affected me somewhat, and I remembered all at once Signor Sandro's stories of the brigands, and the wild-looking peasant who had accosted me in the ravine, and the mysterious individual I had seen that morning talking with

Monica in the tavern at San Polo. Whilst we still halted, hesitating, the guide and Monica had proceeded on their way, and were already some distance ahead of us; indeed, they had arrived nearly immediately beneath the rock on which the solitary figure stood. All at once Monica set up a bawling, tuneless song with a long-drawn wail for its burthen, such as you may hear the Roman peasants singing any summer evening when the sun has gone down, and they rest from labour. At the first sound of it the man turned his head and shouldered his gun, and we, from the distance at which we stood, could see two other figures start up in a half-crouching attitude from among the bushes beside him, but they were probably invisible to those standing immediately beneath the rock. Our two companions stopped, and the guide—a rough, unkempt,

uncivilized specimen of the mountain peasant lad—shouted up some question to the man on the rock. I could hear the sound of his voice, but not the words. The man replied to him, pointing with his outstretched arm down the valley, and in this action his cloak fell back, and I could distinctly see the glitter of weapons in his belt. Then the guide turned and beckoned to us vehemently, shouting and calling to us at the same time to come on.

‘You see it is all right,’ said I; ‘that boy was not certain of his way—I have been thinking so for the last mile or two—and has merely been asking for directions. My picturesque friend, as you call him, is a harmless herdsman.’

‘H’m! So much the better. At all events, he does not appear inclined to molest us.’

We switched our horses and trotted briskly on to rejoin the others.

‘Don’t you know your way, that you stop and ask for directions,’ said Rutherford sternly to our guide ; ‘and what do you think we are to pay you for if you don’t know it ?’

The lad stared glumly, and shook his head. Rutherford’s foreign accent furnished him with a sufficient pretext for appearing not to understand him ; perhaps he really did not understand. We were now very near the group of ash-trees beneath which the fountain was trickling clearly, and the boy suggested that we should let our horses drink from the stone trough ; but to my surprise Monica resolutely opposed this—urging us to proceed, to hasten onward, to get down to Licenza without more delay. Rutherford, too, seemed anxious to go

on ; and, indeed, he said frankly that he should feel more comfortable when we had got fairly away from the herdsman and his companions. So we proceeded down the gorge at as smart a pace as the steepness and crumbling, stony nature of the path permitted. As we rode away I looked upward and backward at the figure on the rock. He took off his broad-brimmed hat with a gesture full of wild grace, and waved it once in salutation. As he did so, I recognised him. He was the same man who had restored my sketch to me that day in the ravine. Then he replaced his hat on his head, and, having pointed first at Monica and then at me, pressed his hand to his heart, and so remained until I lost sight of him.

Rutherford, who rode immediately behind me, observed this pantomime with amazement.

‘ Your “harmless herdsman,” who is armed like Fra Diavolo, and has as cut-throat an air as one would wish to see, appears to be struck with you, Catherine,’ said he. ‘ Perhaps we may thank your *beaux yeux* that he and his comrades, who keep so modestly in the background, didn’t shoot and rob us, and fling our bodies down into the ravine there. Nothing would have been easier. He has chosen a most commanding position for the purpose.’

To my mind it was clear that the man was Monica’s brother. A hundred circumstances flashed upon my memory to confirm it. And thus it might be well that, not to my *beaux yeux*, but to some sentiment of gratitude towards me, we owed our immunity from robbery, if not from worse. But I kept Monica’s secret, as I had pro-

mised to do, and we reached Licenza without further adventure.

There we found Lucy and Signor Sandro installed in the house of Monica's aunt—a poor, bare, stone dwelling, standing, not within the queer little walled town of Licenza, but near to the banks of the river, which here sprawled and spread its clear waters into various wide and shallow channels. There was a little orchard behind the house, all pink with almond blossom, and in the orchard food was set out on a rough deal table. We did ample justice to the meal, and were very merry and cheerful. The day had been lovely, and Lucy was enchanted with the picturesqueness of the scenery she had driven through. Monica's aunt—a weather-beaten, toil-worn peasant woman, mother of many sturdy brats, who rolled about us on the grass, and stared at

us with great dark eyes, like young calves—waited on us, and was kind and friendly, albeit in somewhat uncouth fashion.

‘You did not happen to fall in with a party of three or four young men, who must have been going up towards Monte Gennaro about the same time as you were coming down?’ asked Signor Sandro. ‘They were rather a boisterous crew—artists, the people here said. I did not see them; but the good woman of the house told me that they had been drinking and kicking up a great row in the little wine-shop yonder. They set off to walk up the mountain, meaning to reverse your tour and go down to San Polo.’ We replied that we had seen no such persons. ‘Ah, they were afoot,’ said my master, ‘and probably took some short cuts.’

‘I wish I had seen them,’ said Rutherford; ‘I should have advised them not to

go on unless they were well armed, or had absolutely empty pockets, which might do as well.'

Nothing more was said on the subject at that time, for now Monica took up her tambourine, and a young man and woman of the place advanced to dance the *salterello* for our amusement. There was no other music than the rhythmic tap, tap of the tambourine, and the shaking clash of the loose metal plates on it, with an occasional booming thrum like the sound of a huge drowsy bee. Gradually, as the dancers warmed to their work, the pace became quicker, their gestures wilder and more animated ; and at length Monica started up from the ground where she had been squatting with Oriental nonchalance, and, rushing to the table, seized a flask and drank from its narrow mouth a long, deep draught of wine.

‘Morte ai traditori!’ she screamed, and flung the empty flask over her head like a mad Bacchante. Then she began a dance the like of which I had never seen, nor ever shall see again. *‘Possessed with a devil!’* were the words which came into my mind as I looked at her. She leaped, she turned, she threw her lithe body back till it bent like a reed; she beat her feet with a wild, quick, pulsing movement on the ground. Suddenly she would sink on her knee, and crouch lower and lower at each thud of the tambourine, until her head nearly touched the ground; and then again she would spring up like a leaping flame, and whiz round and round with dizzy rapidity. It was an extraordinary and thoroughly savage spectacle. But it held us all in a kind of breathless fascination, until at length, with the same darting suddenness with which she

had begun, she gave one great wild leap and yell, and dropped, throwing herself prone on the grass, face downward, and remained motionless.

‘*Dio buono!*’ exclaimed Signor Sandro enthusiastically, ‘if you could but have sketched her as she danced! But you might as well try to sketch a flash of lightning.’

The sun was declining when we got into the carriage to drive home. Before we reached Tivoli the stars came out, and the violet-tinted sky stretched solemnly above us. Every bush and wild-flower was fragrant beneath the evening dew, and numberless nightingales sent out their exquisite throbbing music from each wayside copse as the flowers sent out their perfume.

‘In a sweet spring evening like this,’ said Lucy, raising her innocent face to look up-

ward, 'I always feel a sense of such infinite compassion surrounding us. I don't know why, and I cannot well express what I mean ; but all this peaceful beauty and sweetness seems to me like the pitiful voice of One who consoles ; One not ignorant of sorrow, nor indifferent to it ; but who holds a secret of comfort which we, too, shall know some day.'

CHAPTER XI.

‘THERE’S A DIVINITY THAT SHAPES OUR ENDS.’

WITHIN four - and - twenty hours all the countryside was ringing with a dreadful crime which had been committed among the Sabine Hills, at the foot of Monte Gennaro. Two men, foot-sore, exhausted with fatigue and terror, and one of them slightly wounded, crawled into San Polo, and gave information that they had been attacked by brigands in the mountain, that one of their companions had been shot dead and his body flung down a precipice into a mountain stream, and that they two had

escaped as by a miracle. A thousand rumours were flying about, and it was some time before the full truth was known. But the rarity of the crime in those parts, its daring character, and, above all, the name and rank of the victim, excited the intensest interest in the case, and made it the chief topic of public talk for many weeks. The murdered man was the only son—the heir, the hope—of one of the oldest and most illustrious families of the Roman aristocracy. He was the most accomplished, most handsome, most chivalric of noble young cavaliers ; a brilliant figure in elegant saloons, beloved in the privacy of the domestic circle, a firm friend, a generous master, a dutiful son, an affectionate brother, and—alas ! a devoted lover, who left an amiable girl who adored him to mourn the untimely loss of her promised husband.

Above all, he was a staunch and truly pious son of Holy Church, and his cruel fate was understood to have plunged an additional dagger into the afflicted heart of the venerable Pontiff.

Thus—and much more—the clerical journals of the day. Thus—or little less—the other newspapers. And the man whose epitaph they thus wrote was Vittorio Maria Giuseppe de' Principi Bastiani-Corleoni.

Only by slow degrees and in a hesitating way did it begin to be generally remarked that there were sundry strange and unexplained circumstances connected with the murder which gave rise to some curious conjectures.

Don Vittorio had not been robbed. A valuable gold watch and other trinkets were found on his body; whereas his two companions—a Belgian and Sicilian artist—

had been rifled of every valuable about them and of all their money. Clearly the assassination of Don Vittorio must have been due to some other motive than those which generally actuate brigands, and by which these very brigands appeared to have been actuated in the case of the two other men. Then it was whispered about that the two artists had delivered up Corleoni as a scapegoat—had bought their own lives by refraining from resistance, although by so refraining they destroyed the last chance of Corleoni's escape. For the three gentlemen were all armed, and, although fallen upon by surprise, might have made a fight for it; but that the chief of the brigands shouted to them loudly that there was but one life he wanted—Vittorio Corleoni's—and that he meant to have. As to the other two, they were free to go at the price

of their purses. These horrible innuendos crept out after a quarrel between the Belgian and the Sicilian. Each hinted that the selfish cowardice of the other had caused young Corleoni to lose his life. The truth was never fully known ; but the world looked askance at those two men, and before long they vanished from Rome, and new tides of strangers from the east and the west and the north and the south have long ago swept over and obliterated the traces of them from the memories of all the inhabitants of Rome, save one or two.

The brigands got clear off for that time. They were supposed to have fled into the Neapolitan territory, where they continued their depredations with ever-increasing audacity. But only three weeks ago I read in an Italian newspaper a stirring account of an encounter with brigands near

Salerno, and of the death of the celebrated chief, Pasqualuccio, who was shot dead in a hand-to-hand skirmish with the King's troops.

Monica I never saw again after that fateful evening. In the first shock and horror of the news, the chief and absorbing anxiety of all of us—Rutherford, my good old master, and myself—was to prevent its being communicated to Lucy. Had it been told her abruptly I think it might have killed her. But we succeeded in keeping it from her for more than two years. She knew the tragic story at last in its main points ; but neither I nor Reuben ever told her of the suicide of the lost girl whose fate was so horribly avenged. She asked me several times, during the first days after our excursion, if I had news of Monica ; if Monica were not going to sit to me any

more ; why she did not come to see us. And at first I could but say the truth, that I knew nothing of her. But I learned after awhile that she had disappeared from Tivoli, no one knew whither. She was probably fearful of being examined by the officers of justice, who were making inquiries and researches in all directions. Signor Sandro, who had a most widespread and heterogeneous acquaintance, heard by chance that she was married to a peasant of the Abruzzi, and had emigrated to South America with a shipful of other sons and daughters of the soil from Genoa. And this statement was singularly confirmed. My brother John, on his return to Europe for a holiday in the following year, brought me a little coral amulet such as is commonly worn in Naples, and which he said was given to him by a

poor Italian emigrant woman who was dying of fever at Rio Janeiro, and to whom he had had the opportunity of being kind. One day she heard his name by chance, and suddenly raising herself on her miserable pallet, asked him if he had not a sister called Caterina. On his replying that he had, and asking what she possibly could know about his sister, she merely shook her head feebly, and giving the amulet into his hand, bade him carry that to the Signorina Caterina, and ask her to get some priest to say a Mass for her soul.

Our rough-hewn ends were shaped far otherwise for us than we had intended or expected. This often comes over me with a sense of awe and wonder when I remember the girlish plans for the future which my sweet Lucy and I used to make. Sweet,

pure, child-like little Lucy!—I have lost her. She faded away as the pearly hues of daylight fade in the west, serene and lovely to the last. And it is my profoundest comfort to know that the last twelve months of her life were full of a happy peace that truly passeth understanding. She fully embraced the Roman faith ; and her beautiful nature assimilated to itself all that is touching, lofty, and poetic in that religion, whilst its dross had no power to soil the white wings of her soul. She never showed the slightest wish to enter a convent, but lived in the world in loving sympathy with all her fellow-creatures. I sometimes feared, with many bitter pangs, that the disappointment and sorrow of her innocent love-story had undermined her health, and that but for that she might have been spared. But a

wise and gentle old physician who knew and loved her—all who knew her loved her!—assured me that the seeds of consumption were in her from her birth, inherited from her dead mother. Not long before she left us, she was sitting alone with me one evening in the twilight—alone but for one other tiny creature in my arms—and as she leaned her cheek against my shoulder, and played softly with a little waxen hand upon my knee, she said, ‘Isn’t it strange to look back upon, Catty dear? You remember how you used to talk about your being the maiden aunt, and spoiling my children some of these days. And now, you see, it is I who must do the spoiling, for you and my dear good second brother are a great deal too sensible to do it for yourselves. And the poor bairns would be a great deal too

sensible, too, if it were not for foolish Aunt Lucy.'

For I am the mother of two little sons, and Reuben Rutherford is my dear husband. •

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